

WORKING CLASS POLITICS IN CHRISTCHURCH

1905 - 1914

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Jimmy McAloon

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ABSTRACT

The thesis begins by considering the state of organised labour in Christchurch around 1900. Detailed attention is then paid to the role of trade unions in 1905, to wage levels and to employment. Conflicts in the workplace over wages and control of the labour process, which were becoming more severe, are analysed in selected industries. The evolution of the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council and its attitude to political and industrial organisation are discussed. The attempts of Christchurch workers to form an independent political party are examined. Finally, there is discussion and analysis of the crisis of 1913 and its effects on the labour movement.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
ASCJ	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
ASRS	Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants
AUL	Auckland University Library
BoA	Book of Awards
BM	Boilermakers' Union
CEA	Canterbury Employers' Association
CIA	Canterbury Industrial Association
CTLC	Canterbury Trades and Labour Council
DoL	Department of Labour
EJH	E. J. Howard Papers
FLU	Farm Labourers' Union
FT	Furniture Trades Union
FU	Freezers' Union
GLU	General Labourers' Union
IBM	Iron and Brass Moulders' Union
IC&A	Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act
JAM	J. A. McCullough Papers
JTP	J. T. Paul Papers
LT	Lyttelton Times
McC	A. P. McCarthy Papers
MHR	Member of the House of Representatives
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
MW	Maoriland Worker
NZJH	New Zealand Journal of History

Abbreviations cont...

NZLP	New Zealand Labour Party
OB	Operative Bootmakers' Union
OP	Operative Plasterers' Union
PLL	Political Labour League
PRU	Passive Resisters' Union
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SP	Socialist Party
SPP	Socialist Party Papers
T&P	Tailoresses and Pressers' Union
TLC	Trades and Labour Council
TT	Tailoring Trades Union
TU	Tramway Workers' Union
UFL	United Federation of Labour
ULP	United Labour Party
WPA	Workers' Political Association

CURRENCY

12 pence (12d) to the shilling

1 shilling equals 10 cents

20 shillings (20s) to the pound

One pound (£1) equals two dollars

PREFACE

This thesis analyses the political struggles of the Christchurch working class during the ten years before the beginning of World War One. 'Politics', however, is understood to extend far beyond the realm of the Parliamentary debating-chamber or the City Council table; it is concerned with the exercise of power by people over other people, however this may occur. In this study, I am concerned as much with the politics of the workplace as with the politics of trade union organisations or the quest for parliamentary representation for labour. Organised labour's increasing assertiveness and independence after 1905 was grounded in, indeed resulted from, events in the daily lives of workers and their families. Researching these events required a detailed reading of the newspapers of the decade as well as the use of more traditional labour history sources such as union records. In order to get the project completed in the time available, I have concentrated on those groups of workers that have left consistent records for the entire period, or whose struggles were chronicled by the Lyttelton Times. Much has been left out; nevertheless, I believe that what is presented here gives an accurate picture of the processes that affected working people in this city before the First World War.

I have many intellectual debts to acknowledge. In the writing of this thesis, I relied very heavily on the writings of a number of scholars. E. P. Thompson's brand of 'empirical Marxism' has inspired me most of all. His definitions of 'class' are ones that I have come to adopt myself. For Thompson, class

is a 'historical relationship. Like any other relationship, it is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment....The relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real context'. Class happens when people, 'as a result of common experiences...feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves' and in opposition to the interests of others; class experience is largely determined by productive relations. For Thompson, the English working-class 'made itself as much as it was made',¹ through decades of conflict and resistance. Similarly conceived studies have been made of the working class in parts of the United States and Canada by David Montgomery and Bryan Palmer, and my debt to these historians is also large. Harry Braverman's classic Labour and Monopoly Capital informed much of the discussion here of workplace struggles; the writings of Marx himself gave valuable insights into the nature of the State in New Zealand after 1890.² For the broader context of New Zealand society before 1914, the work of Warwick Armstrong, David Bedggood, and Rob Steven helped me to understand much; if I end up agreeing completely with none of them, I believe the truth of the matter lies in a synthesis of their views.³ On the history of the labour movement in Christchurch - for this thesis is first and foremost a study of people in a particular place and time - the theses of Libby Plumridge, on 'Labour in Christchurch 1914-1919' and Melanie Nolan, on 'Jack McCullough: Workers' Representative on the Arbitration Court', were of the greatest value.

1. The Making of the English Working Class, 9-10; 213.
2. See his historical studies of France in Surveys from Exile.
3. See Bibliography.

Thanks must also go to many people for their personal help through the writing of this work. To my supervisor, Len Richardson, for his constant care, long-term loan of books, and many discussions of points raised. To the staffs of the following libraries: University of Canterbury Library; Hocken Library, University of Otago; Canterbury Museum Library; Canterbury Public Library. To Anne Dunstan for taking photographs. To Glenda Dean for typing all this. And to all the people who were with me in one way or another over the past two years and longer - if I named everyone some of you wouldn't like it, and I'd forget someone, but you know who you are. So thank you.

CHAPTER ONE

CHRISTCHURCH LABOUR IN 1900

During the 1870s and 1880s a period of vigorous technological change began within capitalist industry the world over. The consequences of these changes for working people were drastic, changing life in the workplace considerably. In turn this led to new forms of organisation and political struggle within and beyond the workplace.

The nature of the labour-process during the emergence of modern industrial capitalism has been extensively studied in Britain and North America, as well as Western Europe. Before the widespread introduction of power machinery, a strong tradition of autonomous craftsmen persisted and was only slowly worn down by managerial control.¹ This process has not been studied in New Zealand, but is hinted at by one historian in his history of Otago:

The growing efficiency of the steam-engine as a source of power created distinctively modern work patterns where men worked in factories, losing the intimacy of small workshops and surrendering some autonomy and independence to increasingly aggressive management.

1. See Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario 1860-1914; E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism'; Herbert G. Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society in Industrialising America; David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labour Struggles; Harry Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century.

The railway and the steamship, by creating larger markets, made still larger economies of scale possible. The changes hit certain groups of skilled men harder than others. Mechanisation and the introduction of factory methods...sharply reduced the prospects of self-employment and the levels of skill required.... With mounting unemployment wages also fell and even the eight-hour day, which most skilled men considered part of the social contract, came under attack.... Alcohol was an integral part of work routines until factories and machinery forced a change. Men worked at tasks, rather than to clocks, and during slack times a man or boy would be sent out to buy beer.².

This world was almost gone by 1890. We know little about the experiences of workers in New Zealand before the modernisation of capitalism, but by 1900 employers were waging a sustained campaign to impose new routines and disciplines in the workplace.

In 1900, Christchurch had been a major industrial centre for a quarter of a century. Before the late 1870s the city had existed almost entirely as a service centre for Canterbury's wool-kings.³ There had been some industrialisation during the 1860s as local manufacturers began processing raw materials from the province's farms. Tanneries, wool-scours, and lime-kilns were built in Woolston along the Heathcote River. Small food and clothing factories began operations, and furniture and soap factories were in existence by 1865. Blacksmithing would have been done in Christchurch since the city's foundation, but in 1866 a new and significant engineering industry began when P & D Duncan's foundry commenced the manufacture of

2. Erik Olssen, A History of Otago, 104-113.

3. Stevan Eldred-Grigg, A New History of Canterbury, p36.

agricultural machinery.⁴

Transport considerations had much to do with the location of industry in Christchurch, and the transport sector was itself a major employer. The railway goods-sheds made Sydenham a major warehousing area. The railway came through Belfast from the north, branched at Addington to form the lines south and west, had its main yards in Sydenham and Waltham, and went out through Woolston to Lyttelton. Larger wool-scours, soap-works, glue factories, and leatherworks, joined the older and smaller industries in Woolston from the 1880s. Sydenham and Addington grew in a similar fashion; warehouses, brickworks, and potteryworks were also established. Addington was dominated by the Railway Workshops, opened in 1881.⁵

The metal trades grew dramatically during the 1880s. Many iron and brass foundries were set up and became specialised producers of agricultural machinery and engineering equipment. Duncan's were first in the agricultural implements field; Anderson's foundry made heavy machinery such as threshing mills and steam boilers to order, and later also produced refrigerating machinery. Anderson's and Scott Brothers both made steel bridges for the Department of Public Works; Scott's also made iron stoves and kilns.⁶ The owners of these firms became very prominent in Canterbury's employers' organisations during and

4. Ibid, 38-9; Joan P. Morrison 'The Evolution of a City', 162.

5. E.W. Plumridge, 'Labour in Christchurch 1914-1919', 8-10.

6. Morrison, 168.

after the 1890s.

Food processing and clothing manufacture also grew during the 1880s and 1890s. Two large freezing-works, at Belfast and Islington, exported meat to Britain. Most other factories in the food sector were relatively small, with the exception of biscuit-factories and breweries. Numerous clothing and boot factories existed; the Kaiapoi Woollen Mill Company was the largest. As well as a large mill at Kaiapoi, the company employed 475 workers, mostly female, in its Christchurch factory by 1888.⁷ The clothing and boot trades, with some areas of the printing and food industries, were the chief industrial employers of women. With the exception of the freezing works, and often the iron trades, Christchurch's factories produced almost entirely for the domestic market.

By the turn of the century,

Christchurch was the chief industrial centre of New Zealand. It was the principal iron-working district. It employed the greatest number of tanners, cabinet-makers, and tailors. A large proportion of its population was engaged in manufacturing railway rolling-stock and agricultural implements, clothes and woollen goods, books, foodstuffs and tinned goods, baskets and brushware, furniture and ranges. As a commercial centre the city drained the trade of a fifth of the population of New Zealand. Christchurch had achieved distinction as the real industrial capital of a province, the centre of life for a busy factory workers' community as well as for the station owners and small farmers of the province.⁸

By far the greater part of the city's industries had been established during the late 1870s and the 1880s, an era of

7. Ibid, 172.

8. Ibid 187-88.

depression, low wages and high unemployment. The growth of industry was based on cheap and plentiful labour, and Government immigration policy ensured a supply of such labour. Workers' organisations voiced continual protests at this state of affairs until the First World War.

Although the labour market was often oversupplied, and noticeably so after about 1906, there were some ten years of solid economic growth during the 1891-1912 Liberal Administration. These years of growth, which lasted for about a decade from 1895, saw generally high levels of employment for most workers. Wages, if not high, at least provided basic necessities.

The first years of the Liberal Government's reign were years of hardship for most working people. In April 1893 James Shanaghan, the Inspector of Factories in Christchurch for the Department of Labour, reported that trade and employment had been very slack over the previous twelve months:

In the iron trade I regret to say that I have rarely seen an establishment even half-manned in the district, and those employed are rarely busy. The same remark applies to cabinet-makers and furniture-makers, who, with two or three exceptions, have large workshops with hardly anyone working in them.

Shanaghan also reported a great deal of unemployment among unskilled labourers. Moreover, the Department of Labour's attempts to find work for such people were thwarted by employers who

have rarely patronised this office during the past year - only when they wanted work done at a ridiculously low price, and failed elsewhere, would they honour us with a call, and that has only occurred three times I fear there is a strong political under-current

at the bottom of it.^{9.}

Edward Tregear, the Secretary of Labour, identified an additional reason for the hardship faced by unskilled workers in Canterbury. Whereas at one time a family could live for a year off a summer's wages for agricultural work, it was now quite impossible to do this, 'on account of the general introduction of more perfect "reapers and binders", and other labour-saving machinery'. This resulted in labourers having to work for the rest of the year on public-works projects. 'This causes hardship to families, in their breadwinner being sent away to a distance'.^{10.} These problems were in fact the result of an unbalanced economic structure, and recurred until the First World War and after. The city's industries often failed to provide sufficient employment for the tradespeople who sought work in Christchurch, and agricultural work was seasonal. At no time did Government land policy allocate holdings to families who wished to live as semi-independent agricultural workers. Government works projects were, because of the standard of accommodation offered, suitable only for workers without families. The nature of the labour market provoked sustained and vigorous protest from Christchurch workers for many years.

The situation did not improve for some three years. In early 1896 John Lomas, who had replaced James Shanaghan as Inspector of Factories, reported that the 'condition of the labour-market has on the whole been much more encouraging and

9. 'Report of the Department of Labour', AJHR 1893, H-10, 20-21.
10. Ibid, 1.

satisfactory than for several years previously'; all trades were steadily expanding. Unskilled labourers, however, were still in a bad position; 'the little work they get is of such an intermittent nature that it is simply amazing how they manage to exist'.¹¹ The return to 'prosperity' resulted from greatly improved prices for exported wool and from a very good harvest. The colonial economy was not only unbalanced; it was extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in international trade.¹²

By 1900 the recovery from depression was obvious. Almost all trades in Christchurch were 'especially busy'; the iron and engineering trades were doing well, and a long period of 'activity in the building industry was beginning. Even unskilled labourers generally found adequate work. In the woollen-mills, the South African war brought something of a boom through the demand for uniforms.¹³ The engineering workshops in the city had a rush of orders in 1900 for gold-dredging machinery; these shops had less work once the gold-boom ended, but were busy again after 1902, and business remained good for some years. Only the boot trade was doing badly; employment was again low. In 1903 and 1904 the demand for labour, whether unskilled or skilled, was so high that 27,000 immigrants from Australia were easily absorbed - to say nothing of those arriving from England and her territories in the British Isles.¹⁴ The Australians were probably mostly unskilled labourers; those from Britain,

11. AJHR 1896, H-6. XIV.

12. Ibid, i.

13. AJHR, 1902, H-11, ii, and the Dept. of Labour reports in H-11 of each year's AJHR.

14. Ibid, 1903, i, and 1904, i.

skilled tradespeople.^{15.}

The demand for labour meant that wages were generally high. In 1902 Edward Tregear reported to Parliament that award rates had not become the maximum; in a time when labour was in demand, the legal minimum would not keep a good worker. Employers found greater profit in a highly-competent worker at above-award wages, than in a worker of average or below-average efficiency at the award minimum.^{16.} For a few years after the turn of the century the labour market was a sellers' market; some workers obtained higher wages than usual. Even the boot trade had a fairly steady pace of work in 1902; a couple of years earlier it had appeared 'to be steadily losing ground so far as the employment of hands is concerned, artisans being replaced by machinery ever moving forward towards automatic perfection'.^{17.}

The high unemployment and low wages which employers had used as the basis of industrial growth in Christchurch during the 1870s and 1880s also caused working people to organise in defence of their own interests. Naturally, the immediate issue was often wages.

Carpenters and joiners were among the first to organise; they forced an increase in wages from nine shillings a day to ten in 1872, and they went on strike for another shilling a day in 1873. The local branch of the English-based Amalgamated

15. This was the case in 1905; see below p. 43.

16. AJHR, 1902, H-11, iv.

17. AJHR, 1900, H-11, i.

Society of Carpenters and Joiners was formed in 1875.^{18.}

Watersiders at Lyttelton struck in March 1874 for an eight-hour day, 12 shillings a day, overtime rates. They eventually agreed with the employers on 12 shillings for a nine-hour day with an early finish on Saturdays.^{19.} Tailors formed a society in 1872 and went on strike when their proposed log of piecework payments was rejected by the employers. Bootmakers, who were the most militant of all workers in the 1870s, won their wage demands in 1872 without having constituted themselves into a union. When they did officially form a union in 1875, the employers destroyed the organisation by victimisation.^{20.} Bricklayers and painters formed unions in 1872 and 1881 respectively. In 1874 the unions in Christchurch attempted to federate into a Trades Council, but the economic slump made this too difficult.^{21.}

Various attempts were made to federate the city's unions during the 1880s. Two organisations rose, and declined quickly. The Working Men's Political Association was formed in 1881 with a platform of industrial and political reform.^{22.} It lasted for four years, and was succeeded by a local branch of the American-founded Knights of Labour. The Knights had branches all over the country, but do not appear to have lasted beyond 1890.^{23.}

- 18. James Thorn, The Formation and Development of Trades Unionism, 8. These wage-rates were still ruling 30 years later
- 19. Julia Millen, Colonial Tears and Sweat, 49.
- 20. Thorn, 8; Millen, 59.
- 21. Thorn, 9.
- 22. Thorn, 12-13.
- 23. H. Roth, 'American influences on the New Zealand Labour Movement'. Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand, 9 (1961), 413-4. See Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict, ch 6, for a discussion of the Knights in a Canadian city.

The effectiveness of both organisations must have been impaired by the continuing depression.

Many more unions were formed at the end of the 1880s. Shearers formed a national union in 1887 and campaigned for an eight-hour day, shed committees to settle disputes, and all hiring of shearers to be done through the union. An eight-hour day was demanded by many unions as the sweating scandal of long hours and low pay was exposed. Clothing trade workers organised in 1889 into the Christchurch Tailors' Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union; their first object was the abolition of sweating. 400 people attended the union's opening meeting. The union demanded regulated hours, uniform wages, a fixed ratio of apprentices (both to ensure that apprentices were adequately trained and that skilled workers' jobs were protected), the abolition of chart orders - in which workers were paid factory or wholesale rates for goods sold at retail prices - and the coverage of all workers in the trade by the union. The Kaiapoi Woollen Company blacked the union; the 500 unionists employed by Kaiapoi struck for five weeks in October-November 1889. The union won when the non-unionists employed by Kaiapoi joined up and the company made concessions on the piecework log.²⁴.

Sweating and preference of employment to unionists were also behind the formation of the Typographical Association in 1888; that union fought Whitcombe and Tombs early in 1890 for improved wages, equal pay for men and women, and the employment

24. Thorn, 17-20.

of none but unionists. The workers lost; the union was not recognised and a sympathetic boycott by railway workers was beaten by dismissals.²⁵.

In 1889 the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council was formed. The founding unions were the Bootmakers', the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the Typographical Association, the Bookbinders', the Tailors', Tailoresses', and Pressers' Union, the Shipwrights', the Boilermakers', and three rural unions. At the time of the Council's formation, rural workers' unions were banned by employers in Kaiapoi and Ohoka.²⁶ During 1889 unions were also formed covering railway workers, ironworkers, iron and brass-founders, plasterers, bricklayers, carriers, cooks and waiters, and domestic servants. Not all of these survived for very long.²⁷.

The immediate demands of unions at the end of the 1880s were for increased wages, limitation of hours, and preference of employment in one form or another to unionists. Workers in some trades had been organising to gain such reforms for twenty years or more. In some respects the 'new unionism' was not very new. What was new, however, was the extent to which unionism took hold among workers. Employers thus prepared to fight the unpleasant novelty. The showdown came first in the shipping industry and the coalmines, where the employers' power was most

25. Thorn, 23; Melanie Nolan, 'Jack McCullough', 10.

26. Halina Coates, 'The Labour Movement in Canterbury, 1890-1893', 79; Thorn, 26.

27. Nolan, 8.

concentrated. After the Maritime Council had been broken, unions were banned by employers in many trades. The Canterbury Trades Council had to suspend operations because of debt in 1893.²⁸

The defeats of the early 1890s had a profound effect on unionism in Canterbury. Although the Trades Council was reconstituted early in 1894, it was not until 1898 that it began to regain its former strength. When it did so, unionists in the Council were firmly committed to the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1894.

The I C and A Act established a two-tiered system of conciliation and arbitration. Conciliation Boards were designed to assist parties in a dispute to resolve it between themselves. If this failed, the case was referred to the Arbitration Court of three people (a Judge and a representative of the employers and the workers) for a binding award. It was not compulsory for unions to register under the 1894 Act; they could also register under the 1878 Trade Unions Act. Agreements made under the 1894 Act had the force of law, and unions registered under that Act had therefore a certain amount of legal protection. Although unions registered under this system lost the right to strike, the 1878 Act gave no legal recognition to agreements made between employers and unions. In the union-busting climate of the early 1890s, and with the 1890 defeat a fresh and painful memory, most unions welcomed the protection of the I C and A Act. In the late

28. Nolan, 11,15.

1890s the Canterbury Trades Council used this protection to maximum advantage in organising or reorganising workers in many industries.²⁹ What was more, majority opinion in the CTLC at the end of the 1890s favoured political alignment with the Liberal Party and co-operation with employers' organisations on issues such as tariff protection for industry. This was displeasing to a socialist minority within the Council, and the two factions began a long struggle for control of the Council.³⁰

The Trades Council had backed the Liberal Candidates in the 1890 election. The Liberal organisation in Christchurch was dominated by William Pember Reeves, one of the party's more radical members. During the 1890s he formed an organisation known as the Progressive Liberal Association, which separated from the mainstream Canterbury Liberal Association. Both organisations, however, aimed 'to encourage suitable working-class candidates and unionists...to represent labour in politics through unionism'.³¹ The intention was to keep labour as part of the Liberals' political coalition; independent working-class political action was not encouraged. In this way, radical Liberals such as William Tanner (MP for Avon, 1890-1908), Harry Ell (Christchurch South, 1899-1919), Thomas Davey (Christchurch East, 1902-1914), George Laurenson (Lyttelton, 1899-1913) and T. E. Taylor dominated electoral politics. The socialist group within the Trades Council had not only to convert the Council to supporting independent political action; they also had to

29. Ibid, ch 1 and 2.

31. Ibid, 19.

undermine the great personal popularity of the radical Liberal MPs, many of whom had trade-union links themselves.

The socialists in the Trades Council first tried in 1899 to have independent labour candidates for Parliament. Their suggestion was not acted on, despite the Trades Councils' annual conference having voted to support such a principle.³² In 1901 the Council organised the formation of the Christchurch Socialist Party since

Trade Unionists in the older countries are year by year arriving at the conclusion that Trades Unionism alone will not of itself finally settle the difficulties surrounding the wages question, but must be supported and strengthened by an intelligent system of national co-operation in production, distribution, and exchange...
...That the workers can ever receive the whole product of their labour is not possible while the private capitalist conducts the business of the country...³³.

The Council's resolution expressed the hope that the Socialist Party would be formed 'with the help and support of each and every unionist'. The Liberal faction, however, succeeded in limiting the Council's involvement to the first meeting of the party. The Socialist Party was thereby denied a strong base in the city's unions. The Liberal faction in the Council was led by Henry Rusbridge, a carpenter, and John Barr, a stonemason; the socialists' leader was Jack McCullough, a railways tinsmith.³⁴ The battle went in the Liberals' favour for a number of years. In 1902 they again prevented the Council from running an independent election campaign; the liberal candidates were once more endorsed. In 1904 the Councils' annual conference adopted the

32. Nolan, 24; Plumridge, 36.

33. Manifesto in McCullough Papers, Box 1/1.

34. Nolan, 23-27.

proposal of the Otago Trades and Labour Council to form a Political Labour League. The motion was passed by a single vote. The Canterbury delegates voted against the proposal, and John Barr was censured by the conference for his language. By two votes, the Canterbury TLC refused to enter a protest at this.³⁵ Both the CTLC and the national conference were evenly divided on the question of political action; in the Canterbury Council the socialists were growing in strength.

The unions were beginning to organise for independent parliamentary action by 1905, but their attention was also taken by struggles within the work-place. When unions had organised in the 1870s and 1880s, they had been concerned mainly with issues of wages and hours. By the turn of the century, new labour processes were at the centre of a sustained battle for control of the workplace. In the years before the First World War, these struggles became acute as employers sought to impose a work-process that was fitted to more advanced technology. Greater managerial control was imposed over the work process as a means of ensuring that greater output was obtained from each worker. There were many ways in which this was done: the imposition of time-and-motion controls, and of new production techniques which required less skill and were therefore easier to control; the reduction of unions' and workers' control over the allocation of work, especially as this concerned the number of apprentices and other less-skilled workers; and the introduction of payment by output (piecework) rather than by hours (timework).

35. Nolan, 36.

The key to the whole process of establishing managerial control was to remove from the workers 'the control over work through the control over the decisions that are made in the course of work'.³⁶ These new methods of operation, or 'scientific management' as they were known, were pioneered in the United States during the 1890s and after. Scientific management 'starts, despite occasional protestations to the contrary, not from the human point of view but from the capitalist point of view, from the point of view of the management of a refractory work force in a setting of antagonistic social relations'.³⁷

If the issue is control of a stropky workforce, the employers will want to ensure that workers' organisations do not become strong. From the late 1880s, unions demanded that their members be given preference of employment. This would have given them a strong and recognised role in the workplace. The battle for control of the workplace, in the late 1880s and early 1890s, was fought over the issue of whether unions should be recognised at all and under what conditions. For example, in 1890 Whitcombe and Tombs banned the Typographical Association from its premises, and the Trades and Labour Council imposed a boycott of the company in an attempt to force recognition of the union.³⁸ The State Railway Commissioners were opposed to a national railway union in the 1880s and expressed the view that the workers of a state corporation should be exemplary in 'proper discipline, respectability, harmony, intelligence and sobriety'.³⁹

36. Harry Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital, 107, his emphasis.

37. Ibid, 86.

38. Nolan, 10.

39. Ibid, 7.

In 1894, the Commissioners refused to recognise the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants until it disaffiliated from other labour organisations. The ASRS accepted these terms and withdrew from the Canterbury Trades Council.⁴⁰ State and private-sector employers thus had similar policies towards workers' unions. In the late 1890s, employers in the private sector began to form 'a political alliance against socialism'; the Christchurch Chamber of Commerce was reorganised in 1897 and the Canterbury Employers' Association (CEA) in 1899. The CEA was the largest Employers' Association in New Zealand by 1900.⁴¹ The CEA devoted much energy to fighting the unions' demand for preference. Preference was the most prominent topic in the Arbitration Court until about 1905, apart from wages and hours. Preference was first granted by the Court in 1896, to the Christchurch Operative Bootmakers' Society, on the grounds that most workers in the trade belonged to the union in any case. The employers were immediately incensed.⁴² Despite constant agitation by Trades Councils and unions, preference could only be gained in Court awards on a case-by-case basis. The Liberal Party refused to enact compulsory preference into law.⁴³

Preference was not the only issue of control fought by Christchurch bootmakers in the late 1890s. The boot trade suffered constantly from a lack of employment, 'artisans being replaced by machinery ever moving forward towards automatic

40. Ibid, 13.

41. Ibid, 26-7.

42. D. W. Crowley 'The Labour Movement in New Zealand 1894-1913' 20-21, 22.

43. Ibid, 25.

perfection'.⁴⁴ The employers blamed the problem entirely on competition from imports; in 1898 J. A. Frostick, a prominent factory owner, addressed the union on this point and asked it to allow weekly wages.⁴⁵ The bootmakers had previously had a piecework agreement which gave good wages as there was a large amount of hand-work involved in bootmaking. The employers wished to have work done on the new machines paid for at weekly rates instead; labour in the industry was becoming de-skilled. In 1896, at the Conciliation Board hearings, the employers made a distinction between skilled and unskilled labour, by which they meant hand-work and machine-work. The union objected on the grounds that all boot-making work was skilled, and the new 'procedures would lead to the breaking-up of bootmaking into a team-system of mass-production, which removed all control of the labour process from individual workers and was therefore 'opposed to the spirit and principles of unionism'.⁴⁶ The Arbitration Court allowed employment on weekly wages without restriction 'when the wages are satisfactory to the employer and the employed'. Disputes were to be resolved by an industry board of conciliation consisting of employers' and workers' representatives; these sat at the local and the national level. The award also allowed each employer 'the fullest control over the management of his factory, and to make such regulations as he deems necessary for time-keeping and good order', and to 'introduce machinery at any time without notice and to divide or subdivide the labour in connection with such machinery as may be

44. Dept. of Labour, AJHR H-11, 1900, i.

45. OB 8 Mar 1898.

46. Dept. of Labour, AJHR H-6, 1896, xxviii.

necessary'. Workers were forbidden to place any restriction upon the output or working of machinery.^{47.}

The introduction of more efficient machinery gave employers the opportunity to force piecework rates down. Thus, in the boot trade, as well as in others, the workers came to oppose piecework, where they had once accepted it. There was a long controversy within the Bootmakers' union over this issue.^{48.} New machinery also gave employers the opportunity to employ many more non-tradespeople in the boot trade; the union was fiercely opposed to this. From 1896 to about 1902 the union and employers engaged in many Arbitration Court battles over these issues. 'Employers used victimisation to gain their ends; the Bootmakers' union had to pay compensation to a number of its members who got 'deprived of work through Unionism'.^{49.} The union suffered further reverses in the Conciliation Board in 1903, where a new award was negotiated. For some time the employers had been seeking to get the union to agree to short time; in 1901 they offered an equal distribution of short hours if the union would agree to the principle. This was refused. In 1903 the union agreed to accept short time; a four-hours minimum per day was accepted.^{50.} Weekly hours were cut too, from 48 to 45, and the union advocate 'promised the Employers to ask the men to endeavour to work a little harder to compensate for the 3 hours reduction'.^{51.} As a further incentive to work harder, the weekly wage was not immediately raised but it was stated by a

47. BoA, I, 203.

48. E.g. OB 17 Aug 1898.

49. OB 10 May 1899.

50. OB 31 Jul 1901.

51. OB 18 Sept 1903.

leading employer that 'any man who at the end of the year showed that he had earned as much in 45 as he had in 48 would receive the increase'.⁵².

Workers in the boot trade experienced the impact of technological change and the de-skilling of their work. Employers had conducted a sustained campaign of attrition against the union, by continually ignoring its attempts to assert some control in the workplace. This was so even when the union abided by the principles and procedures of the Arbitration Act. As one of the less technologically advanced industries, the boot trade was among the first in which the restructuring of production took place. After 1905, these processes were experienced in many other industries. This had its counterpart in other areas. The Liberal Government became noticeably less sympathetic to the labour movement and moved towards a position of openly attempting to control unions rather than negotiate with them. This was in response to pressure from employers' organisations. The Liberal Party was in an ambiguous position as a party of reform; when crisis came, the party found itself more naturally aligning with the defenders of the established order. Employers' organisations beyond the workplace became a great deal more aggressive in the promotion of restructuring and employers' control of the workplace, and unions had to organise to match this.

CHAPTER TWO

WAGES, EMPLOYMENT, AND CONTROL 1905-1912

By 1905 most observers of Christchurch's economic situation were optimistic that prosperity was general and permanent. Employment prospects appeared to be good for skilled and unskilled alike. Christchurch's manufacturing strength was concentrated in engineering, metalworking, clothing, footwear, and food processing; transport was of great importance to the regional economy. Yet the prosperity that was observed in 1905 had existed for less than a decade. Before 1896 workers in many trades had suffered unemployment and low wages. In some trades, too, such as printing and bootmaking, employers had waged a campaign to extend their control over the workplace and to impose new technologies and labour processes that increased the profits made out of each worker. In the boot trade, the employers had largely attained their objectives by about 1902. For the next three years the face that Canterbury trade unionism presented was that of numerous large and thriving organisations, able to peacefully and amicably resolve differences with employers through the conciliation and arbitration process. As a celebration of its stability and influence, the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council commissioned the building of a fine new Trades Hall.

The ten years before World War One, however, were to be very turbulent for the labour movement in New Zealand. Wages had

risen somewhat from 1895 until about 1900, but remained static after that. From 1905 they fell rapidly and continuously behind the cost of living. Employment again became difficult to find in many trades, yet immigrants continued to pour into the country, encouraged by Government advertising that the unions regarded as misleading. On the shop floor, employers stepped up the campaign to restructure production and impose tighter managerial control. The situation of working people changed greatly between 1905 and 1914, and this had far-reaching political causes and consequences.

I. The Functions of Trade Unions

In 1905, six and a half thousand Canterbury workers were registered as members of trade unions. Some of the stronger ones were the various unions in the metal trades, especially the Iron and Brass Moulders; the two Carpenters' unions, the clothing and boot trade unions, and some of the printing trade unions. Some unions, especially the Drivers and the General Labourers, were small in 1905 but would become large and well-organised by 1910. Others, such as the Shearers' Union, were numerically large but awaited a good organiser.¹

A good number of unions had been formed in the couple of years before 1890. The enthusiasm of those years was often accompanied by unrealistic expectations of the new unions' power of of the time it would take to inaugurate the Workers' Commonwealth.² After the collapse of many unions in the employers' offensive of 1890 and after, the Canterbury Trades and Labour

1. Department of Labour Report, AJHR H-11A, 1905, 5-6.

2. Melanie Nolan, 'Jack McCullough', 10-12.

Council had taken advantage of the legal protection given by the 1894 Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act to form or reconstitute unions of workers in many trades during the late 1890s and the first years of the 20th century.³ Some unions, however, had survived 1890 nearly intact; among these were the Amalgamated Societies of Railway Servants, of Carpenters and Joiners, and of Engineers.

Unions had varied functions, according to the nature of the trade and the backgrounds of their members. Most important, of course, was the negotiating and registering of an award through the Conciliation and Arbitration process; it was necessary to register as a union under the 1894 Act in order to have its protection. Perhaps the second most important job unions did was to provide benefits for their members. In a time when social security was almost nonexistent - old age pensions were the only benefits paid by the state in New Zealand - many workers depended on their unions for assistance in times of sickness, unemployment, and death. Union minute-books are full of such payments to union members. The Operative Bootmakers' book shows £10 for funeral expenses to a member; the Iron and Brass Moulders had a national system of levies payable for funerals on the death of members or their dependents. They also assisted the widows of deceased members.⁴ The Furniture Workers' Union gave financial assistance to apprentices in legal fights with employers, but like many unions relied on donations by members to assist those in hardship, rather than having a formal system of payment. In

3. Ibid, 16.

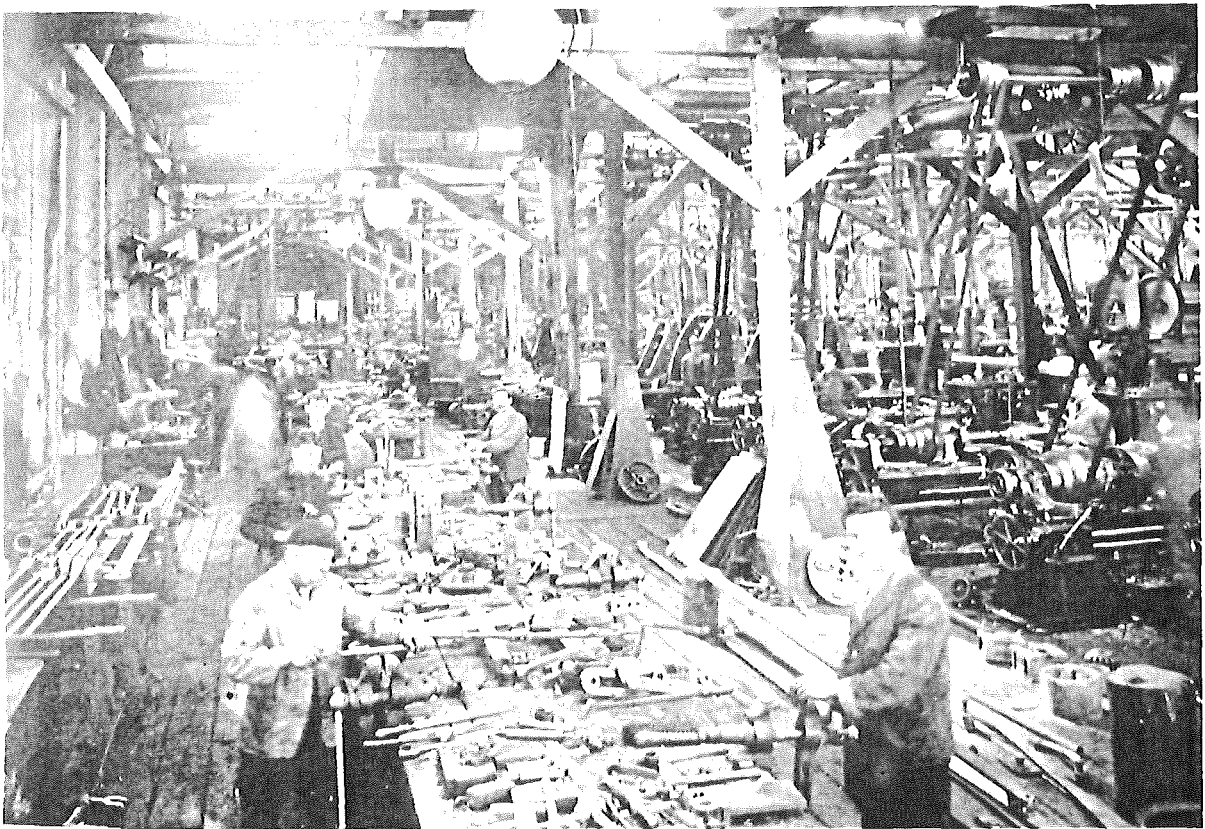
4. OB 22 Mar 1905; IBM 24 Nov 1905, 27 Jul 1906.

Two views of the Addington Railway Workshops.

Top: the Blacksmiths' Shop

Bottom: the Brass Fitters' Shop

- Canterbury Times 4 Jan 1911, 45.



1909 it opened a subscription list to raise £400 for a house for the family of a member who had died.⁵ This perhaps reflected the reluctance of some unions to become dominated by benefit matters to the detriment of the more important task of fighting the bosses. Some unions, on the other hand, regarded benefit functions as more important: these tended to be the older craft unions, which had strong feelings of being exclusive bodies. Ritual was important to these unions. The rules of the Boilermakers' Union, for instance, required that the President open each meeting with the following words:

Worthy Officers and Brothers - Having assembled together to transact the business of the Union, I hope you will deal fairly and impartially in any case that may be brought before you, in honour to yourselves and with credit to this body, of which you are members. Worthy Brothers, I declare this meeting duly opened.

The ritual for closing the meeting called on the President to say:

Officers and Brothers, I thank you for your attendance here tonight. Let us retire with kindly feelings towards each other. I now declare this Union duly closed.⁶

This union had a special benevolent fund into which members were required to pay, and money came from this fund for widows of members, for loans to members, and in cases of hardship.⁷

The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners operated in a similar manner, and also conducted sales of the tools of deceased brothers.⁸ As well as benefit systems, most unions had at least annual socials - card evenings and smoke concerts were the most common. The sense of fraternity among skilled workmen was

5. FT 10 Jul 1907, 17 Nov 1909.

6. BM, Minute Book, Rules.

7. Ibid, BM 23 Mar 1905, 10 Mar 1908.

8. ASCJ 13 May 1912.

also shown in the use of clearance cards; by these, members who travelled could be welcomed by kindred unions elsewhere. The Boilermakers, for instance, admitted one member on a clearance card from America in 1907, and issued clearance to one Bro. L. Warren on his leaving the district.⁹

Unions thus had a variety of functions in the Christchurch of 1905; these had different emphases from union to union. But the issues that had prompted workers to form unions between the 1860s and 1890s were nearly always related to wages and conditions of work. As wages fell behind the cost of living after 1905, workers became more militant in their views and less willing than before to accept the arbitration system without question.

II. Wages and the Standard of Living

Workers in the nineteenth century had a well-known rhyme to express their idea of reasonable wages and conditions:

Eight hours' work
Eight hours' sleep
Eight hours' play
And eight bob a day.

The shilling-an-hour wage, claimed as long ago as the 1880s,¹⁰ was by no means universal even in 1905, and nor was an eight hour day. Relatively few trades worked more than a forty-eight hour week, though: many worked over eight hours per day for a five and a half day week. The aim of most unions at this time was to

9. BM 12 Mar, 9 Apr 1907. For a discussion of the clearance system, which originated among the tramping artisans of Britain in the 1820s, see Eric Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, 34ff.

10. Stated by Hiram Hunter, LT 30 May 1911, 3.

secure a forty-four hour, five and a half day week; that, however, was regarded as only a stage on the way to a still shorter week.

Only the most skilled workers could expect wages of more than one shilling per hour at the beginning of 1905. Even the serving of an apprenticeship was no guarantee of receiving such a wage. Bootmakers, of whom there were in Christchurch 417 men (over 20) and 212 women, had an award of 11½d per hour for a 45 hour week. This gave a weekly wage of 33 shillings of ordinary hours were worked. Overtime wages were higher, but only after the first two hours.¹¹ Such provisions varied from trade to trade. The metal trades were among the better paid; skilled workers were often paid up to £3 or more per week. The awards specified 10 shillings per day for blacksmiths, 1s1½d per hour or £2 14 per week of 48 hours.¹² The metal trades were important in Christchurch; agricultural implement-making and the railway workshops, as well as foundries and smaller engineering shops, employed many workers. Carpenters were among the most highly-paid workers. They had been granted hourly wages of 1'4 for a 44 hour week, giving £2 18 6. Yet the furniture trade paid only 1'3 per hour, or £2 15 per week, to cabinetmakers.¹³ Most working people, however, struggled along on much lower wages. Labourers did not get an award at all until 1908, and even then a shilling per hour was given as the wage. Unskilled workers in

11. Dept of Labour Report, AJHR 1905, H-11, 37; Book of Awards, vol IV, 1903, 323.

12. Dept of Labour Report, 35-6; Book of Awards, vol V 1904, 64; vol VI 1905, 219.

13. Book of Awards, vol I, 1894-1900, 293; Dept of Labour Report 1905, 38.

other forms of labour were similarly paid: most fellmongery workers received between 10½ pence and one shilling per hour, and slaughtermen's assistants also got 10½d per hour.¹⁴ For a 48 hour week such wage-rates gave £2 2. That was also the going rate for drivers of one-horse vehicles; additional horses meant another four shillings.¹⁵ Tramway workers had similar hourly rates of less than a shilling. Most of the figures given here are for adult men; women were to be found chiefly in printing, bootmaking, clothing, and the lighter food industries as well as in domestic service. The printing trade gave equal pay regardless of sex; printing was one of the best-paid jobs at £3 per week.¹⁶ In the clothing trade, fully qualified journeymen had a minimum of £2 15 per week, but women got no more than £1 10. Pieceworkers could earn more, but women had a lower base-rate than men, at 8d per hour rather than 12d.¹⁷ It was expected that women workers would largely be young and unmarried, and therefore without the family responsibilities that were used to justify higher wages for men. However, significant numbers of women workers were over 20 years of age, and may well have had dependents of some sort or another.

Even for the more highly-paid and skilled workers, there was little room to move within the weekly pay-packet. The Iron and Brass Moulders' Union unsuccessfully applied to the Arbitration Court late in 1905 for a cut in hours to 44 per week, to allow

14. Dept of Labour Report 1905, 40; BoA vol VI 1905, 116.

15. BoA vol III 1902, 533.

16. DoL Report, 44.

17. Ibid, 38.

a more even distribution of work, and for a wage rise. The Union presented a budget for its members, assuming £3 per week (the award rate) and five children. Rent of a four-room house accounted for 16 shillings; groceries, 10 shillings; meat, 8 shillings; bread, 3 shillings; milk, 3 shillings; gas, 1 shilling; wood and coal, 5 shillings; vegetables, 3 shillings; lodge, 1 shilling; union, 6 pence; papers, 1 shilling; tobacco, 1 shilling; tram, 6 pence; insurance, 1 shilling 3 pence. This left 5 shillings and 9 pence for boots, clothing, education of the children, any entertainment, and sickness.¹⁸ It is obvious that living-standards were not high, if it was taken as normal that a skilled worker's family would live in a house of four rooms. The employers resisted the Moulders' application successfully; the Court held that there were no 'reasons for altering the wages under this award...the conditions of the trade does not warrant this'.¹⁹ Employers had complained that the trade was in a depressed condition, even though four new foundries had recently been built in Christchurch. The Union advocates asked one such employer if his new factory had been paid for out of losses.²⁰ Wages for moulders had not risen since 1900, and the rate was fixed in 1905 for a further three years. It was, perhaps, important to the cause of employers that moulders' wages be held; metal trades employers were prominent in Canterbury employers' associations. Gilbert Anderson, a foundry-owner, told the Canterbury Employers' Association in 1905 that wages were generally too high for local industrialists to compete with

18. LT 21 June 1905, 5; 16 Nov 1905, 7.

19. BoA vol VI, 1905, 219.

20. LT 14 Jul 1905, 4.

imports; he was President of the CEA that year.^{21.}

Few wage increases were granted in 1905. Indeed, in most trades the wage-rates had been set at least five years previously, generally on three-year terms. The Arbitration Court simply refused to concede increases, despite evidence presented by the unions as to their members' living-standards. The Department of Labour, despite the general optimism expressed in the reports of its Secretary, Edward Tregear, was concerned at the cost of housing. The Department made a survey of rents paid by workers in various towns; in Christchurch the workers surveyed paid average rents of between 15% and 25% of their wages. These figures, however, were only derived from skilled workers; those on a shilling an hour or less were not included. Even so, the trend among skilled workers was to pay between a quarter and a third of wages in rent. Clearly, few owned their own houses. Tregear summarised the results by comparing the rise of 8½% in wages since 1890 with a 30% rise in rents and a 10 to 50% rise in the price of many of the necessities of life.^{22.} Even in the cautious language of a Departmental report, concern was expressed by the Secretary at the increased cost of living. Workers who made less than the moulders' £3 per week must have often struggled to make ends meet.

Itinerant labourers and even settled unskilled labourers were especially badly paid, and the effect of low wages was intensified by the near-universal practice of payment only for

21. LT 12 Aug 1905, 10.

22. DoL Report 1905, AJHR H-11, iv and 99.

time worked. Many labourers in the building trades, in municipal and Public Works employment, and on farms, lost wages if the weather was bad. It was precisely these jobs that were looked to to absorb unemployment, and the sometimes erratic income of these workers was an additional burden to that imposed by uncertain work. The Charitable Aid Board received many requests for help in these circumstances, especially in winter. One labourer, for instance, had only 30 shillings per week to support his family and was forced to appeal to the Board.²³ Even when in regular work, City Council labourers were only paid 42 shillings a week. Drivers, on the same wage, at least had the security of a clause in their award that forbade deduction of pay for bad weather or public holidays.²⁴ They were unusual among outdoor workers in this, however. The labourers who worked to construct facilities for the International Exhibition held in 1906 were paid an average of 8 pence per hour, or £2 per week, according to one anonymous correspondent.²⁵ The authorities did not deny this. Commenting on the general show of prosperity that Christmas 1906 had seen, one union leader observed that 'the beautiful fruit is not sound to the core. The rot has got into it, and increases more rapidly than its outward glory'. There had been 'a large increase in the number of people who are just on the line that divides the poor from the recipients of charitable aid. In other words, if there is an increase in the wealth of Christchurch there is an increase in the number of people who are living on the verge of poverty'.²⁶

23. LT 6 Jul 1906, 7.

24. BoA vol III 1902, 533.

25. LT 21 Dec 1906, 5.

26. John Barr, LT 5 Jan 1907, 4.

Much of this hardship was hidden, not openly advertised; working people's sense of dignity made them very reluctant to admit poverty.

The cost of living was higher in the cities than in the countryside, and highest of all in Christchurch.²⁷ But rural workers fared little better. The Farm Workers' Union began organising throughout Canterbury in 1905 and in the following three years collected much evidence of low pay and bad conditions. Accommodation was often crowded, and food consisted chiefly of bread and mutton. Many farm workers came forward of their own accord with stories of personal experience. 'An Englishman' told of being paid 4 shillings a day (with food) as a shearer's rouseabout, giving around a pound a week. He had been sacked by one employer after asking for 5 shillings a day.²⁸ Hours were long for farm labourers; 'Hunita' wrote of a day lasting from 5.30am to after 7pm, and of crowded sleeping quarters. When the Labour Department Inspector came, he was 'plied with the best of food and whisky' by the farmer. 'I have had fifteen years' experience of farming and station work, and I have yet to discover the generous farmers that some of your correspondents would like us to believe exist'. He regarded smaller farmers as the best employers; many 'take the men into the house and treat them like one of the family...they are able to get good workmen to stay with them for many years, as they prize home comforts more highly than wages'. This experience was confirmed by other

27. LT 9 Jun 1907, 2.

28. LT 11 Jan 1907, 9.

workers at the Conciliation Board hearing in 1908.²⁹ Some larger stations likewise provided good conditions.³⁰ Farm work, however, was largely undertaken by single men as farmers were generally unwilling to employ married workers.

In neither town nor country was a shilling an hour universal, despite constant agitation by unions. In 1906 such a wage was expected to provide a bare minimum of comfort, yet only workers with some level of formal skill could expect to receive it. According to the Labour Department, the following classes of workers did get over a shilling an hour: blacksmiths, bakery foremen, coopers, brewery night-workers, furniture tradesmen, carpenters, joiners, coachbuilders, curriers, moulders, range-fitters, wool-sorters, flax-strippers, some flour mill workers, plumbers and gasfitters, printers, leading timberworkers, journeymen tailors, and tinsmiths.³¹ Despite the excessive cost of wages alleged by employers, factory employment continued to increase. In early 1907 slaughtermen across the country, in the first major strike since 1890, downed tools to demand a wage rise of 25%, from 20 shillings per 100 sheep to 25 shillings. They got 23 shillings.³² Other unions were not able to use such power as their trades were not crucial export industries; they continued to rely on the Arbitration Court for wage increases. Some were successful; in the clothing trade, pressers gained an extra 5 shillings a week.³³ The Typographical Association got a wage of £3 10s per week in 1907; the employers offered £3 6s.

29. LT 5 Jul 1907, 4; 11 Mar 1908, 5.

30. LT 22 Nov 1907, 2.

31. DoL Report AJHR 1907 H-11, 61f.

32. See below, p. 81-85.

33. LT 7 Mar 1907, 5.

These workers had been on £3 per week since 1900, and pleaded to the Court that 'they were sober and industrious, and probably as meritorious employees as ever came under the jurisdiction of the Court....They desired to maintain a good standard of living, to live in a reasonably good house, and to be able to put something aside for a rainy day, but at present, even with the most careful laying-out of their wages, the linotype operators could save little or nothing'.³⁴ Other workers, doubtless just as respectable, did not win the Court's favour. The Boiler-makers asked for 12 shillings a day; that rate had been fixed in 1897 but had fallen to the current 10 shillings which most other metal tradesmen also got. Their plea was refused, the Court apparently once again swayed by manufacturers' claims of hardship.³⁵

Wage-earners were particularly vulnerable in times of economic depression. After over ten years of sustained growth, export prices fell sharly in 1908 and 1909, and this caused a short but sharp depression.³⁶ Much unemployment resulted in all trades. At the same time, wages remained static. Few unions in New Zealand were willing to follow the example of the slaughtermen in striking for higher pay; the slaughtermen had a monopoly on a skill crucial to the country's exports. Canterbury unions remained firmly committed to the Arbitration Court in pursuit of wage increases. Some got small rises. The carpenters and joiners, who had been on 1'4 per hour since 1900, were

34. LT 15 Aug 1907, 4; BoA vol II, 1900, 177, & vol VIII, 1907, 306.

35. LT 29 Aug 1907, 3.

36. DoL Report AJHR 1910 H-11.

granted an extra penny an hour by the Court in 1908, although the Conciliation Board had previously agreed on 1'5 per hour.³⁷ Railway workers, whose Society enjoyed direct negotiations with the Government, secured a minimum of £130 per year for married men (or about £2 12 per week) and £100 for single adult men. It was the first pay rise since 1876.³⁸ Drivers got a rise of two shillings per week; they had asked for eight shillings, and two hours less, to 45 per week.³⁹ The Drivers' Union presented evidence that a family with two small children needed £2 3 3½ a week; one-horse drivers had been getting £2 2.⁴⁰ Tramway workers claimed a rise to 1'1½ per hour for motormen and 1s per hour for conductors. These workers had organised themselves into a union in 1906 and had constant disputes with the Tramway Board (a municipal authority) over wages and conditions. They agreed in conciliation proceedings to accept these rates of pay only after three years' service, and had to accept the Board retaining power to disrate workers to lower scales of wages.⁴¹ Several labourers secured slight rises to 1'1½ per hour for many workers, with one shilling as a general minimum. The Workers' Representative on the Arbitration Court, Jack McCullough, publicly dissented from the extent to which the lower rate was applied.⁴² Such wages were affected by the weather as well as the state of trade; many labourers struggled on 30 shillings a week due to short time. One casual timberyard labourer told the Arbitration Court that he earned even less.

37. BoA IX, 1908, 75.

38. LT 10 Aug 1908, 3; 13 Aug 1908, 5.

39. LT 28 Oct 1908, 7; BoA IX 1908, 845.

40. LT 12 Dec 1908, 7.

41. LT 28 Jan 1909, 8; 22 Apr 1909, 2.

42. BoA IX 1908, 452; X, 1909, 317.

He and his wife had eight children; he took care of footwear needs by getting hold of old shoes and repairing them himself. The man became upset as he told his story. The employers' representative asked whether his home bootmaking was 'an encroachment on the union?'⁴³. Skilled workers fared even worse before the Court: male bootmakers got an extra penny an hour, to 1'0½d, but female workers got £1 7 6 per week, or five shillings less than the men. Furniture workers, moulders, tinsmiths, plumbers, and most other skilled workers got no rise in wages whatsoever.⁴⁴. Tannery workers also got no rise from their shilling an hour, and protested at a special union meeting against their award, 'the most biassed and prejudiced ever delivered by the Arbitration Court'. Their president persuaded them against going on strike or cancelling their registration, but a resolution calling for the sacking of Judge Sim, the President of the Court, and expressing no confidence in the administration of the arbitration system was easily carried.⁴⁵. Many other union meetings expressed similar feelings.

As solutions to hardship and the rising cost of living, many labour organisations favoured state action as well as wage rises. Political and industrial organisations both repeatedly called for state factories to be set up to produce basic necessities as cheaply as possible. When bread went up in 1907, the Moulders' Union protested 'forcibly on the tactics of the Flour Millers' Trust...it being an added Burden to the already burdened Workers'. They called on the Trades Council to request

⁴³. LT 28 Apr 1908, 6; 11 Dec 1908, 10.

⁴⁴. BoA X 1909, 819, 594; IX 1908, 809, 444, 385.

⁴⁵. LT 7 Apr 1908, 8.

'Parliament to start State Flour Mills'.⁴⁶ Parliament was not responsive to such requests; the Liberal Party could not afford to unduly upset manufacturers, even if it wanted to. The only such initiative the Government did take was in constructing a number of 'workers' dwellings' in the larger towns. These however were relatively few in number. The programme was begun in 1905; by 1910 there were just 30 houses in Christchurch, at rentals of 10'6 to 12'11 per week.⁴⁷ For a skilled worker such a rental was tolerable if not cheap, for an unskilled worker on a shilling an hour or less, it was impossible. The occupations of the inhabitants reflected this. It could well be concluded that the government had little idea of the need for cheap housing, and was more interested in keeping the votes of highly-skilled workers. There was no shortage of labour or money for a larger construction programme: the building trade was slack in 1909, and a million pounds was found to purchase a battleship for His Imperial Majesty (along with a baronetcy for the Prime Minister). This did not go unnoticed by many workers.

If most workers got little or no increase in wages until 1909, some did a little better in the next three years. These workers were mostly the lower-paid and unskilled. In early 1910 slaughtermen across the country demanded a rise of two shillings per hundred, to 25 shillings, and a standard eight hour day. They gave two weeks' notice to strike if their demands were not

46. IBM 24 May 1907. All quotations are reproduced as in the original.

47. AJHR 1910 H-11B, 3.

met, and they had a wage increase within ten days.⁴⁸ Shearers were likewise able to use the threat of direct action to win a substantial rise. Employers were attempting to have the standard rate of 18 shillings per hundred cut by sixpence; the workers demanded 20 shillings, a forty-eight hour week, and proper food.⁴⁹ By dint of refusing to take up contracts for less, they got the lot. William Sim, the Arbitration Court Judge, had repeatedly told workers' advocates that if workers didn't like the award minimum, they didn't have to work. He was not pleased when some workers took his rhetoric at face value.

Slaughtermen and shearers were only able to enforce their demands because their trade was essential to the export economy and employers would have found it difficult to sit out a strike. Few other workers were in such a strong position; most had to depend upon the generosity of the Arbitration Court. Wharf labourers got a rise of twopence an hour, to 1'5 for most work, early in 1912. They did this, however, by negotiating directly with employers in a nationwide conference.⁵⁰ This was part of a movement by some unions away from the 1894 arbitration system altogether, into direct negotiation backed by the threat of direct action. Although frustrated with the Court, most Christchurch unions stayed with it, perceiving little real alternative. Tanners and City Council drivers were about the only workers in Christchurch who got a pay rise of any substance at this time, but they were among the worst-paid workers anyway. Tanners got

48. LT 7 Jan 1910, 9; 15 Jan 1910, 10.

49. LT 12 May 1910, 6; 20 May 1912, 18; 30 May 1910, 7.

50. LT 17 Jan 1912, 20.

a general rise of one and a half pence per hour, giving an absolute minimum of a shilling an hour. This trade kept a 48 hour week.⁵¹ The Council drivers went up to £2 9 per week for one horse and £2 11 for two horses, a rise of four and three shillings. Hours were longer than for other drivers, who got a flat rise of four shillings a week, making £2 8 and £2 12.⁵² They had wanted £2 14 at least, and were very displeased with what they got. All drivers, whether employed by local authorities or private companies, had a common grievance of not being paid for the many hours spent each week in looking after the horses.⁵³ Most skilled workers got minimal increases. Carpenters and joiners got a halfpenny an hour, to 1'4½. They had wanted 1'6, in a time when most awards lasted for three years.⁵⁴ The Painters' award gave no increase; they had been stuck on 1'3 per hour since 1900.⁵⁵ Metal tradesmen got similarly low rises; moulders got an extra halfpenny an hour, but their trade was vulnerable to de-skilling; new forms of machine-work commanded significantly lower wages.⁵⁶

The cost of living continued to rise quickly. In May 1912 the Government established a Royal Commission on the matter with terms of reference covering the past 20 years. It sat in the four main cities and heard 270 witnesses.⁵⁷ While some prosperous people told the Commission that the chief reason

51. LT 5 May 1911 15; BoA XII, 1911, 349.

52. BoA XIII 1912, 54; LT 22 Oct 1912, 7.

53. LT 18 Sept 1912, 10; 5 Nov 1912, 7; 10 June 1912, 9.

54. LT 31 May 1911, 7.

55. LT 18 Oct 1911, 10.

56. LT 5 Dec 1912, 5.

57. The Commission's report is in AJHR 1912, Session II, H-18.

for the increased cost of living was that 'people are spending too much in amusements and luxury',⁵⁸ those with a more intimate knowledge of workers' living-standards had different views. Wages had increased some 10% in ten years,⁵⁹ but clothing and food had gone up by much more. Effie Cardale, secretary of the Coal and Blanket Fund, said that the price of meat had doubled in five years, milk had gone up 40%, bread by 25%, and potatoes - 'such a standby for big families' - had been 5'6 a sack and were now up to £1. Boots had increased by some 25%, as had house rentals. Mrs Cardale testified that some three and four room cottages housed families of nine or ten children. She spoke of budgeting problems, and of the hardship encountered by families where the husband left town in search of work. At the same time she criticised the lack of self-help: 'In nine out of ten houses you go to there are no gardens, although in most cases there is enough land to grow vegetables',⁶⁰ Gardening, however, requires an outlay for tools and seeds, and some stability of lifestyle in order to do the work. Evidence was also given on enforced price-fixing by the Grocers' Association, which controlled wholesaling.⁶¹ The advance in technology and the increased rate of exploitation of workers was having a noticeable effect. Dan Sullivan, a past president of the Furniture Trades Union, told the Commission that workers required much more energy to keep up with the increased speed of production.⁶² In some trades technological innovation had resulted in fewer workers being employed; the tannery trade was

58. H.W. Heslop, Landagent; p63.

59. P.J. delaCour, boot manufacturer, p64.

60. Pp66-67.

61. John Joseph Westgarth, ex-grocer.

62. P125.

cited as an example.⁶³ Union leaders openly admitted that many of the urban unemployed were refusing to take available farm work because the conditions in such work were so bad in a large number of cases. Harry Campbell of the General Labourers' Union said he knew 'scores of general labourers who are anxious to go into the country if they could be assured of getting a fair living, particularly married men. But they object to go out and live in barns, as some of them have had to do in the past'.⁶⁴ There was provided neither land, housing, nor schooling in the country for the families of farm workers. Hiram Hunter, secretary of the Drivers' Union, had moved to Christchurch in 1898 because the station-owner for whom he worked did not wish to employ both Hunter and his wife. Hunter believed that 'nine out of ten men would rather be in the country...provided they had sufficient land around their houses to enable them to put in their spare time on the land' and be semi-independent.⁶⁵

The Commission was presented with a working class family's budget by Augusta Wilson, whose occupation was given as 'married woman'. It amounted to £2 9 9 per week for food, fuel, clothing,

63. Rowland Edward Cowper, tanneryworker and member of the GLU, p143.

64. P102.

65. pp173-4. The views on land reform expressed here conflict with both orthodox interpretations of labour's land policy before 1914. The left, for example, Erik Olssen, argues that land reform was favoured because labour activists wanted to weaken capitalism's power in land speculation, not because they wanted to move on to the land themselves. The right, for example Christopher Campbell and Miles Fairburn, argue that workers wanted to become small-farmer capitalists. Neither side has grasped this semi-self sufficient, close-to-the-land ideal as expressed by Hunter before the Royal Commission.

and rent for a family with three small children. It did not allow for tram-fares, school-books, entertainment or tobacco or beer, or for sickness, childbirth, or additional children. The only way families on this wage or a lower one could manage was to cut corners, especially on the nutritional value of food.⁶⁶ A wage of £2 9 9 per week was only enjoyed by the more skilled workers in the Christchurch of 1912. Labour Department figures show that workers who did get such a wage were most tradesmen in ironworks and engineering workshops, some male bootmakers, some male biscuit and confectionery workers, some brewers, most furniture workers, most carpenters and joiners, some male clothing workers, some plumbers, most male printing workers, and most stevedores.⁶⁷ Painters, slaughtermen, some tramway workers, skilled bakers, and drivers of two or more horses also got £2 9 9 or greater.⁶⁸ No women came anywhere near it.

This survey of wages has shown that, if wages in New Zealand were 'high' then they were only so in comparison with wages prevailing in Britain or Ireland. This point, in fact, was made at the Royal Commission on the Cost of Living.⁶⁹ In terms of the cost of living in New Zealand, and of the expectations for a better life (often fostered by the propaganda of Government immigration authorities) which had led many to come to New Zealand, wages were altogether too low. The printers summed up the

66. Averaged from 'a good many' families' accounts, p68.

67. AJHR H-11, 1912, 29ff. The tables are extensive.

68. As shown by the Book of Awards.

69. By Robert Allan, managing director of Skelton Frostick and Co., bootmakers; p80.

aspirations of at least the skilled working class for 'a good standard of living, to live in a reasonably good house, and to be able to put something aside for a rainy day.'⁷⁰ It became increasingly difficult to do this. Not only were wages not keeping up with the cost of living; there was for many workers, both skilled and those without formal training, often a good deal of insecurity regarding employment.

III. Employment and Unemployment

The difference between skilled and unskilled workers in Christchurch in the years before the First World War were most noticeable in the matter of employment. Highly skilled workers enjoyed reasonable security of employment in the decade to 1905. The unskilled or less skilled were much more likely to have to move around after the work, whether within Christchurch, or out into rural Canterbury, or even further afield. Navvies and farm labourers were the most mobile workers, whether long-established in this country or recent immigrants. Some skilled workers were especially vulnerable to layoffs or short hours; clothing and bootworkers, especially women, were most likely to suffer reduced wages by these means. The employment situation was of course closely related to immigration, which remained at high levels until the war began. Labour organisations claimed that immigration flooded the job-market, whether through Government ineptitude or deliberate design. After 1905 unemployment became much higher, and was especially bad in 1908-09 and 1911. Uncertainty of work increasingly became the experience of skilled workers as well as the less skilled.

70. LT 15 Aug 1907, 4.

In 1905, however, the Department of Labour reported with confidence that 'New Zealand has continued to expand its internal energies and augment its possessions...on the whole the advance has been very great and well-sustained'.⁷¹ The advance was not uniform, however. In Christchurch, the iron trades had mixed success: engineering and boilermaking were not busy; and neither were the building trades. This was especially so for carpenters and joiners; most building was in stone and brick commercial premises. Unskilled workers, however, had no shortage of employment; many who applied were recent immigrants, including 'quite a number of Australians' who came to work on tramway construction.⁷² This pattern of 'full employment for the great majority of workers', including thousands of immigrants, continued into 1906. Work was generally 'continuous and stable' which made up for the failure of wages to keep pace with the cost of living. Over the course of 1905 all trades became busy.⁷³

Immigrants were mainly from two areas: Australia and Britain. Australians were usually unskilled workers who arrived with little money - reports were given of some who had as little as 1'3 in hand - and they took labouring jobs outside Christchurch. The British, on the other hand, commonly landed with £30 or £40 and were skilled in a trade. They stayed in the town; any that were unskilled went into the rural areas like the Australians.⁷⁴ The chief Public Works schemes in Canterbury were railway construction between Waipara and Cheviot and on the

71. AJHR, H-11, 1905, i

72. Ibid. xiii

73. AJHR H-11, 1906, i-ii.

74. LT 20 Jan 1905, 6.

West Coast line. The unskilled English were sent to the North Canterbury works; thirty went in three days in early February.⁷⁵ The Labour Department had some difficulty finding workers for the West Coast line. In neither job was the pay high; nine workers quit at Cheviot in March 1905 in protest at their wages, which worked out at 6'10 per day, compared to nine shillings on North Island and Otago works. These men had families to keep in Dunedin, where they had come from three weeks previously, and their board and lodging at Cheviot accounted for 14 shillings each week. They had only worked nine days in three weeks due to bad weather.⁷⁶ Workers on the West Coast line had similarly low wages. Most work was done by co-operative contract, a system where workers joined together in a gang to do the work at a rate of pay according to progress. This had been promised at Staircase Gully, but the promise was not honoured by the works managers. Wages there were only 5'6 a day, compared to a promised rate of 8 shillings. One 'Navy' informed the Lyttelton Times that the Labour Department made no commitment on a wage-rate when workers were hired, and any protest was met with the stock answer of 'there are plenty of your sort that don't want work; clear out'.⁷⁷ Another worker, John Leonard, pointed out that with prices 25% higher on the works than in town, and wages below the desirable minimum of eight shillings a day, 'the man on day work on the co-operative works spends most of his time working for the storekeeper. Naturally, he does not toil with much ardour under the circumstances, and good men with the

75. LT 11 Feb 1905, 6; 23 Feb 1905, 7.

76. LT 7 Mar 1905, 4.

77. LT 27 Apr 1905, 9; 29 Apr 1905, 7.

pick and shovel will not stay'.⁷⁸ Even so, there were 5499 artisans and labourers employed on such works at the end of 1905.⁷⁹ Good roads and railways were essential for the developing economy, and the continuing arrival of immigrants from Australia helped provide workers for their construction. Australians also came over for the harvest and for grass-seeding.⁸⁰ When rain prevented this work from being done, the Labour Bureau was kept busy by those seeking other work.⁸¹ English labourers tended to be sent to the North Island public works schemes, where the demand for labour was high. Many South Island labourers refused this work because they were settled with families and did not want to move to isolated areas. Wages were too low to make it desirable to send money home from rail works.⁸²

Immigration was not only used to supply labour for public works. The clothing trade was one industry where employers took full advantage of immigration schemes. The Kaiapoi Woollen Company brought out a large number of young women from Australia on contract in early 1905. Thirty-eight coatmakers were laid off when the Australians arrived, and were later offered re-employment at wages below the award minimum. A further 50 Australian women were brought out by Kaiapoi later in the year. The Political Labour League made strong protests to the company and the Prime Minister without result.⁸³ In the next year,

78. LT 28 Oct 1905, 11.

79. LT 16 Dec 1905, 5.

80. LT 20 Jan 1906, 5.

81. LT 9 Feb 1906, 5.

82. LT 9 May 1906, 7; 22 Sept 1906, 13.

83. LT 31 Mar 1905, 6; 5 Apr 1905, 5; 7 Apr 1905, 3; 10 June 1905, 7; 22 Sept 1905, 2.

however, the clothing trade was in a boom; Kaiapoi tried to get workers from Dunedin as 'at the present time we have 100 machines idle for want of hands'. The Kaiapoi Company's search for 'skilled girl-labour' continued into 1907.⁸⁴

For women immigrants the other main occupation apart from the clothing trade was domestic service. No other aspect of the employment market showed as clearly as this the existence of a social hierarchy in New Zealand, and the extent to which young working-class women asserted some control over their own lives. The demand for domestic servants in the first decade of the century always exceeded the number of women who were willing to take on such work, even at the relatively high wages being paid. At the beginning of 1907 the Lyttelton Times noted that in Christchurch there were 'many complaints in regard to the difficulty of obtaining helps and in regard to inducing them to do their work satisfactorily and to remain in their positions. It is the same old story of utter dislike on the part of girls for domestic work and of the attractions of factory life'. These 'attractions' were fixed and shorter hours, which gave free evenings and weekends, more company on the job, and independence after hours from the boss.⁸⁵ One anonymous correspondent to the Lyttelton Times put it thus:

Domestic servants are looked down upon, and by no one more than their employers... In many houses I have noticed that the girl's afternoon and evening off is liable to vary at the whim of a petulant employer. Result - a broken appointment, somebody kept waiting time after time, and the poor lassie loses her sweetheart... Take

84. LT 18 Oct 1906, 7; 19 Feb 1907, 2.

85. LT 4 Jun 1907, 5; 7 Jan 1907, 6.

the case of a girl who is at leisure every night, and it is plain that she has a much greater chance of marriage than her one night a week sister. The present age of employers would rather see a black snake at the back-door than a young man, and if the latter individual goes up to inquire regarding his lady-love's delay in getting out, he often meets with such scant courtesy from her employer...that he goes away a rank, raving Socialist, with the determination to induce his friend to leave domestic service... in many cases this has been the cause of the thinning of the ranks of helps... A servant is not a chattel,⁸⁶ but a human being with feelings that can be wounded.

Working conditions were not good; as 'Colonial Cook' wrote, 'girls at the present time are next door to being sweated, but they can always leave and get another place. The cry is more girls, but I say: Mistresses, do more work yourselves, or pay more wages, which you can easily do by not living above your means and trying to sweat the girls for it'. A cook's day could easily last for 15 hours or more.⁸⁷ In the experience of 'One of the Maids', 'where there is one good mistress there are two bad ones... I have known a mistress to come into the kitchen to order the meat, and count so much for each member of the family, but the maid's share of it is the smell when cooking. Of course, a maid is made of everlasting material, and is something like a clock, which, when wound up Monday morning, will go until that day week'.⁸⁸

It seemed that, as with farm labourers, the larger employers were often the better ones. According to 'Aughty Mrs 'Arris', the real trouble came from the 90% of employers who were 'the domineering wives of a pack of shopkeepers and mechanics who can afford a domestic and were once domestics themselves and who try

86. LT 19 Jun 1907, 7.

87. LT 25 Jan 1907, 3.

88. LT 2 Apr 1907, 3.

to ape what they can never be, viz, ladies....A kind, considerate, refined gentleman never has to wait long for a really good servant....The domestics want shorter hours, a fixed standard wage, civility not servility, and liberty to have their sweet-hearts come to see them.⁸⁹ Some well-to-do employers could be just as domineering, however; one Fendalton woman criticised English-born servants, 'who have their bicycles and other luxuries....Their ideas can hardly be said to pave the way for the making of a good working man's wife....I like to see servants neatly and daintily dressed, and I like them to have as much freedom as possible, but I cannot see that flying about from seven o'clock in the evening until eleven or twelve is good home-training'.⁹⁰ That, even if such liberty was only allowed one night in the week. One of the city's doctors was even more hostile towards servants who demanded better conditions; he condemned those who 'are endowed by fate with high aspirations but mean little natures, and feeble intelligence, and instead of taking their right place in society with honour and credit, spend their days in trying to throw discredit upon others who are trying to lift all to a higher plane'.⁹¹ These attitudes hardly belonged in a society which perceived itself as classless. Unsurprisingly, the city's servants began to unionise in 1907. The demand for servants remained such that they and agricultural labourers were the only classes of workers who were assisted as immigrants in 1907.⁹²

Unemployment became noticeably high in 1907. In May,

89. LT 29 Jan 1907, 2.

90. LT 4 Jan 1907, 5.

91. 'A Medical Man' LT 25 Jan 1907, 3.

92. LT 5 April 1907, 5.

between 300 and 500 labourers turned up for 40 jobs dismantling the Exhibition Buildings. The Lyttelton Times claimed that so many had come simply because of the attraction of clean, dry, continuous, well-paid work, and that unemployment was not abnormally high. The General Labourers' Union discussed the matter; its Secretary, Arthur Paterson, said that unemployed workers had very little confidence in the Labour Department's Labour Bureau. This was because many employers refused to use it, preferring to recruit workers off the streets and fix below-award wages and conditions. Official unemployment statistics were compiled from Labour Bureau figures and the numbers on unions' employment books, which many workers did not sign. Therefore, union officials had a different perception of the rate of unemployment than did the Labour Department or the newspapers; official figures consistently underestimated the situation.⁹³.

The building trades were much slacker over the summer of 1906-07 than the Labour Department recognised - it had reported good conditions, but the Trades Council knew that work was very hard to find.⁹⁴ Skilled tradesmen were beginning to experience difficulty in finding work; one 'Old Colonist' reported having been out of work for three months to the end of 1906. Sometimes 100 men applied for one or two jobs.⁹⁵ Respectability was no guarantee of employment. 'A Master Mason', who was a married man, an abstainer, a non-smoker, and a Freemason, told the Lyttelton

93. LT 21 May 1907, 8; 22 May 1907, 6; 22 May 1907, 7;
26 Jan 1907, 12.

94. LT 26 Jan 1907, 12.

95. LT 4 Dec 1906, 9.

Times he had been a year in Christchurch and found it very difficult to get work. At 27 years of age, many employers refused to hire him, preferring boys at 17 shillings weekly. 'It is a bitter enough experience for a man to see himself drifting helplessly towards destitution through no fault of his own, but when his misfortunes bring suffering and privation on a poor, innocent woman as well, it's enough to convert a self-respecting British citizen into a bomb-throwing Russian Nihilist'. He also criticised the Christchurch Freemasonry; it had rendered him no aid and indeed Masonic employers black-listed him for having once quit from the employment of a prominent Mason.⁹⁶ Immigrants had been attracted by advertisements in England which extolled this country as 'the working man's paradise....In no other part of the Empire do legislative and general conditions so thoroughly foster and encourage the advancement of the working classes'.⁹⁷ Many saw little of this advancement, however, and one skilled man noted that he had seen such an advertisement but on arrival in this country could only get navvying work.⁹⁸ In October 1906 the Trades Council wrote to English newspapers stating that such advertising was misleading, and warning prospective immigrants of an already overstocked labour market. The Department of Labour protested, but some prominent Christchurch employers, and private labour bureaus, supported the Council. Although farmers wanted labourers, many workers would not take such jobs either from experience of the conditions or because they had families which farmers

96. LT 6 Dec 1906, 5.

97. LT 31 Mar 1906, 10.

98. LT 27 May 1907, 7.

would not provide for.⁹⁹ Yet immigrants continued to arrive through 1907 and the Government Immigration Agent reported success in finding them jobs - mostly as farm labourers or domestic servants.¹⁰⁰ Conditions in such jobs were better than those in England, but not such as to appeal to workers who had spent some time in New Zealand or were born here.

By the beginning of 1909 even the Department of Labour's officials recognised that the employment market was, to say the least, unbalanced. There was 'a dearth of employment in the cities, especially for unskilled labour, and men connected with the building trades...but outside, in the country districts, the stress is not felt to any great extent', there being work for harvesters and fruit-pickers. As we have seen, though, little agricultural work was suitable for married workers. At this time about 200 immigrants arrived in each ship at the rate of 1000 a month, and most landed in the North Island.¹⁰¹ Yet sufficient of them came south for there to be a strain here as well. In the winter of 1908 unemployment became especially bad in Christchurch, and things remained bad for eighteen months.

The usual winter shortage of work became noticeable in July 1908, and it was clearly worse than normal. In Wellington, only 1000 of the Waterside Workers' Union's 1600 members had work.¹⁰² In Christchurch an estimate of 500 unemployed was given.¹⁰³

99. LT 19 Oct 1906, 4; 22 Oct 1906, 5.

100. LT 28 Dec 1907, 10.

101. LT 15 Jan 1909, 3; 5 June 1909, 8.

102. LT 17 Jul 1908, 8.

103. LT 18 Jul 1908, 11.

A meeting of 800 in Cathedral Square demanded right-to-work legislation and condemned the Government's immigration policy. L. R. Wilson, a labourer and a local socialist agitator, claimed that 75% of those who had been in Christchurch for under three months were employed in the city's factories and that longer-standing residents had been replaced by immigrants, 'not because the latter were better workers, but in order to break down unionism'. The meeting also protested at the Government having spent up to £10 000 to welcome the American Pacific fleet earlier that year. At the end of the meeting 100 unemployed walked down in the rain to see Charles Allison, the Mayor. Allison told them that it was too wet to start municipal road-works, but promised such relief as could be organised.¹⁰⁴ The City Council set aside £200 for relief work and asked the Government for an equal subsidy. The Government was 'not impressed' by the claims of hardship and refused to give any subsidy.¹⁰⁵ Meetings of the unemployed continued in the Square, being attended by up to 300 at first. After one such gathering, 89 people went down to the Labour Bureau in search of work. The unemployed were by no means all unskilled; only 49 of these men were labourers. They included 14 carpenters, 8 painters, and an assortment of other trades. Up to 50 painters and plasterers were turning up each day at Trades Hall in search of work.¹⁰⁶ City Council relief works employed some men, but the Labour Bureau offered only navvying at Broken River on the rail works. Men inexperienced at such work could not hope to

104. LT 20 Jul 1908, 8.

105. LT 21 Jul 1908, 8; W. Hall-Jones (Minister of Public Works)
LT 28 Jul 1908, 7.

106. LT 22 Jul 1908, 7; 8 Jul 1908, 11.

make good wages on the piecework rates prevailing there. By the end of August, however, 300 were employed at Broken River.^{107.} Almost half of these were single men; as always, the married were less mobile and found it harder to get work.^{108.}

It was expected that unemployment would drop with the coming of spring, but it did not do so. The Government began a policy of retrenchment in Civil Service employment, and this led to many sackings. It was claimed that 100 railway construction workers and 30 trademen at Addington had been laid off in Christchurch. The number of trained smiths at Addington's smiths' shop was cut from 45 to 17.^{109.} The Moulders' Union had many unemployed members, and 50 men applied for 8 jobs (two skilled and six unskilled) at one foundry. The General Labourers' Union recorded 60 unemployed at the end of the year.^{110.} Metal trades and building trades were depressed throughout the country.^{111.} One cabinetmaker, Joseph Smith, arrived in Christchurch from London in September 1908 and had work at his trade until Christmas. He was then laid off because of slackness of trade; his wife and child were due to arrive in the country. Two months later, Smith was only able to get work grass-seeding on Banks Peninsula. The Lyttelton Times was not sympathetic: 'When a man who has had no time to adapt himself to the requirements of the country takes fright at his first weeks of idleness and calls out against the reports that induced him to come to New Zealand, he is displaying a poor spirit, that does not call for

107. LT 23 Jul 1908, 9; 20 Aug 1908, 6.

108. LT 7 Oct 1908, 6.

109. LT 3 Dec 1908, 6; 15 Nov 1909, 6.

110. LT 30 Dec 1908, 5.

111. DoL Report 1910, AJHR H-11, iii-iv.

a great deal of sympathy from either the Government or his fellow-workmen'.¹¹². Which implied that, even in this 'working man's paradise', a skilled worker should accept short time, redundancy, job-hopping, and no work at his or her trade. Even a bumper harvest did not reduce the pressure on working-class families; settled families were unable to do this work, and 'carpenters, bricklayers, masons, plasterers, painters, cabinet-makers, and numerous others 'were out of work by the score'.¹¹³. Some unions had trouble administering their unemployment-books; many carpenters signed in the Carpenters' and Joiners' book without being union members.¹¹⁴. Unions continued to demand a halt to immigration, without success.

The winter of 1909 was at least as bad as the previous one. In May a local activist, L. R. Wilson, publicly asked for the unemployed to get in touch with him, and 50 people replied. These covered all trades, and most had been unemployed for the past seven months. In some cases it was women who wrote, as their husbands were too proud to admit difficulty in providing for their families.¹¹⁵. Once again the City Council promised relief, but needed Government subsidies to do anything effective. This was not forthcoming, since the Minister of Labour, Alexander Hogg, believed that 'in no case can (unemployment) be deemed to be acute'. The City Council's Works Committee had 180 names of those looking for work in early June; two weeks previously 83 people had applied to the Labour Bureau.¹¹⁶. An unemployment

112. LT 11 Feb 1909, 8; 13 Feb 1909, 5, 8.

113. John Barr, LT 14 Feb 1909, 12.

114. LT 20 Feb 1909, 6.

115. LT 29 May 1909, 9.

116. LT 8 June 1909, 5; 9 June 1909, 7.

committee of unions and other bodies was set up, and took over the job of collecting names. Three Christchurch MPs went to the Prime Minister and asked again for a subsidy to local body relief works. 'The Prime Minister emphatically declined to accede to the request, stating that he considered that the Government's own relief works would absorb the unemployed'¹¹⁷ - yet, as had been pointed out, these works were simply unsuitable for many of the unemployed, especially those with families. It is worth noting, too, that the downturn must have affected all trades, yet women were nowhere considered in the provision of relief work. City Council relief works did not start until well into July, and the City Engineer, Arthur Dudley Dobson, stated that over half of those given such work would be paid less than 8 shillings a day. The General Labourers' Union had no choice but to agree to these permits. Some workers, too, because angry at the personal details they were required to divulge, resenting the invasion of privacy.¹¹⁸ As if low wages were not enough, each man was limited to six days work; this later became one week in four. The City Council had at first been helpful towards unemployed workers' delegations, but as these began to protest at wages and conditions, the Council adopted an attitude of annoyance that the unemployed were not humbly grateful for its generosity.¹¹⁹ The Lyttelton Times shared the Council's attitude, and said that 8 shillings a day catered for 'men standing around and waiting for soft billets'. Thirty indignant men marched down to the Times Office and vigorously pointed out that

117. LT 16 June 1909, 2.

118. LT 25 June 1909, 9; 26 June 1909, 10.

119. LT 29 June 1909, 7; 1 July 1909, 8.

they did not want charity, but work at proper wages.¹²⁰ Many of the unemployed were victims of restructuring in Government enterprises; for instance, 140 workers were laid off at the Addington Workshops in the first few months of 1909. John Andrew Millar, the Minister of Railways, emphatically stated that he intended to make his department pay its way.¹²¹

An accurate measure of the extent of unemployment is difficult to get; many workers did not register as unemployed. They 'shrank from being so regarded. It did not appeal to their manhood...they would rather sell all they had than be published as unemployed'. 665 applications for relief had been received by the end of July. In Wellington, where things may have been even worse, over 1000 union members were out of work.¹²² The Trades Council took over the organisation of the unemployed in late June and there were complaints that the Council did nothing except defuse protest. Alfred Hart, the chairman of the Council's unemployment committee, criticised demonstrations as alienating public sympathy, and claimed there was 'no need for all this display and seditious talk'. W. Kilgour, the organiser of the demonstrations, regarded this as a stab in the back. The demonstrations' attendance had been dropping anyway, probably due to a sense of futility and the reluctance of many who were unemployed to advertise the fact.¹²³ The City Council's funding of relief work ended in late August, by which time numbers of unemployed had decreased, but much hardship remained. Even at the beginning of 1910 there were plenty of idle men at

120. LT 30 June 1909, 8.

121. LT 16 Apr 1909, 6, 7.

122. LT 6 Jul 1909, 8; 8 Jul 1909, 8; 24 Jul 1909, 11.

123. LT 28 Jul 1909, 7; 29 Jul 1909, 8.

Lyttelton until the cocksfoot harvest began.¹²⁴.

The winter of 1910 was not as bad as the previous two, due to unexpectedly fine weather, but Arthur Paterson, secretary of the General Labourers' Union, reported about 150 unemployed at the beginning of August, chiefly from the building trades and labourers.¹²⁵ The only class of work that reported a consistent shortage of workers in 1908 and 1909 was domestic service - despite the hard times many young women refused to take such work. The Department of Labour's Women's Employment Branches were always calling out for more servants, and farmers again began to call for more immigration of farm labourers. 'Factory owners likewise again began to claim a shortage of workers. The Department of Labour, in a change from earlier reports, now stated that immigration policies could not solve this as long as wages in Britain were as good as in New Zealand, and the only advantage in New Zealand was shorter hours. This was especially true for women workers, and it was the employers of such workers that claimed the greatest difficulty in filling vacancies. John Lomas, the Department's Secretary, also claimed that the shortage of domestic servants was due to high wages, of 15s to £1 per week and keep. 'I cannot emphasise too strongly how greatly this must affect the health of mothers and, incidentally, the birth-rate', he wrote, apparently forgetting to ask himself just how many working-class families could afford a servant at all.¹²⁶.

124. LT 29 Jan 1910, 9.

125. LT 24 Aug 1910, 6; 5 Aug 1910, 6.

126. DoL Report, AJHR H-11, 1911, XVI and introduction.

Unemployment remained high, with much hardship again experienced in the winters of 1911 and 1912. It seemed as though the slump in 1908-09 had lingered, not fully ending. Employment on the Lyttelton wharves dropped from 440 throughout 1910 to 370 at the start of 1911, chiefly because output of coal had declined. The watersiders' union expected things to get worse, as the Government had recently laid off another 60 miners.^{127.} Farmers continued to demand immigration, but it became even more clear that this was so that they could have cheap labour. Adult workers could not be relied upon to stand for the low wages and poor conditions often found, so the Department of Labour arranged to bring out youths from English cities on indentured contracts. 250 farmers applied for the first 50 youths.^{128.} It was easy to see why: these youths, isolated from family and other social contacts, with no experience of unionism, could be relied upon to work long hours for bad food - salt meat, bread, and tea - and for 10 shillings a week.^{129.} The Department refused to accept criticism, believing that 'immigration properly conducted always results in an all-round increase of employment and wages'.^{130.} This was not the experience of many workers in either town or country. Farmers continued to provide no accommodation for married couples, as 'A Farm Hand' indignantly pointed out in a letter to the Lyttelton Times: 'Sir - Will you kindly allow me to show in your paper that Mr. D. Jones is an undignified Tory when he advises married farm workers to take their wives with them onto a sheep station and live in a hut,

127. LT 17 Jan 1911, 6.

128. LT 6 Jan 1911, 8.

129. LT 6 Apr 1911, 5.

130. LT 19 Apr 1911, 7.

with no washhouse, and water a hundred or two hundred yards away from the kitchen door?',¹³¹. Many who would have preferred to work and live in the country were thus denied the chance to do so. The Farm Labourers' Union was not overly keen on the mere provision of decent accommodation for married couples on farms; they regarded this as a loss of independence. The union wanted 10 acre blocks leased by the Government to farmworkers in order to allow some measure of independence from their employers.¹³². Many skilled urban workers were also unable to work at the trade of their choice; the Drivers' Union had in it many skilled men who could get work only as drivers. The iron trades may have supplied a number of these drivers. P. & D. Duncan's agricultural machinery factory, for instance, had laid off 134 workers between 1908 and 1910, bringing its workplace down to 701.¹³³. The lack of work of one's choice must have been resented by many workers who were thus affected. Many may have left Christchurch.

For the unskilled, the problem continued to be finding work of any sort. It was estimated by Michael Laracy of the Shearers' Union that half of the unskilled workers in Christchurch were casuals, who moved from job to job. These were of course the ones who suffered most unemployment, yet in times of prosperity their services were in demand.¹³⁴. By August 1911 there were again 400 labourers unemployed in Christchurch, and distress was becoming acute. One man in St. Albans recounted that 'Last week

131. LT 6 June 1911, 5. Jones was secretary of the North Canterbury branch of the Farmers' Union.

132. LT 21 May 1912, 8.

133. LT 9 Dec 1912, 8; 4 Feb 1911, 12.

134. LT 14 June 1911, 2.

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I received 12s, out of which 7s went for rent. This week I got 7s....I have a wife and four children to keep. I have been to all the timber-yards, and tried to get work everywhere. My wife has had to go out to work'. And another had 'had three weeks' work in the last two months, and I am behind in my rent. We have not had any decent food for three or four days, and we have made 3d the last two days. I have looked everywhere for work. My wife expects to be confined very soon, and I must obtain assistance'. Yet another had been out of work for five weeks, and had to pay rent of 14 shillings weekly. His average income over the past four years had been 25 to 30 shillings a week.¹³⁵ The Mayor, Henry Holland, expressed his concern and said it was the Government's problem. The Government, in the person of Sir Joseph Ward, said that the unemployed could work at the Cass or Cheviot railway works.¹³⁶ Apparently he had not in previous winters heard why this sort of work was unsuitable for most urban unemployed. Even so, a meeting of unemployed workers resolved to take this work if they were guaranteed £2 per week in wages.¹³⁷ They were not. In any case this work slackened off in 1912; from March to July the numbers employed on road and rail works fell by 423.¹³⁸

As the great conflicts of 1912 and 1913 approached, many workers and their families had been experiencing some years of hardship, if indeed they had ever enjoyed real security. For very many workers, employment was precarious. Skilled and unskilled alike were liable to suffer short time, redundancy, and

135. LT 22 Aug 1911, 5; 2 Sept 1911, 3.

136. LT 7 Sept 1911, 4; 9 Sept 1911, 7.

137. LT 11 Sept 1911, 9.

138. LT 18 Jul 1911, 12.

the denial of a choice of work. Wages were usually inadequate or only just adequate to support a family, and both skilled and unskilled saw the job market continually flooded by new immigrants. Common experiences of hardship meant that the divisions between skilled and unskilled workers, never great in this period, were eroded even further, and these experiences led to a sense of solidarity among workers by 1913 that often cut across lines of skill or other divisions.

IV. Conflict and Control Over the Workplace

The experience of falling real wages and higher unemployment in most areas of work between 1905 and 1914 was accompanied by intensified struggles on the shop floor for control of the workplace and the labour process. In common with those in other capitalist societies at this time, the employers in New Zealand embarked on a sustained campaign for greater managerial control over the workplace. This control, which extended to matters of the speed of work, the allocation of work, and the type of machinery used, was sought by employers as a means of ensuring greater output per worker, and thereby increased profitability for the industry.¹³⁹ The process took a number of forms: the imposition of time-and-motion control and other production techniques which required less skill and were therefore both cheaper and easier to control; the reduction of unions' and workers' control over the allocation of work, especially as this concerned the numbers of apprentices and other less-skilled workers; and the introduction of payment by output rather than

139. See Karl Marx, Capital, vol I, chapter 25 for a discussion of the drive to increase profitability.

by hours. This occurred in different trades at different times, but the overall thrust was to break the work-process up into component parts and allocate parts to each worker. The buzzword was 'efficiency' and the aim was to reduce or destroy what power workers did have in the production process.¹⁴⁰

Employers in Canterbury fought the workers on two fronts to achieve this: in the Arbitration Court and in the workplace. The Holy Writ of the new doctrine of efficiency was in the writings of American management theorists, especially Frederick Taylor; Canterbury employers at the time spoke approvingly of 'American methods'.¹⁴¹ Prior to the advent of 'scientific management', capitalists' control consisted of bringing the workers together into a factory, setting hours, supervising workers, and enforcing rules against distraction. Taylor's practices extended this to the absolute control of the precise manner in which work was done, and by whom. Taylor himself applied his methods to shovelling dirt, timber milling, quality-control, but particularly to the engineering and metal trades, which had more decision-making points within the production-process than most others.¹⁴² The metal-trades employers of Christchurch pioneered the systematic imposition of 'American methods' in this city, but some years earlier there had been similar struggles in the boot trade.

Christchurch's metal trades workers were well organised

140. See Palmer. A Culture in Conflict, ch 1.

141. The creation and imposition of 'scientific management' is discussed in Harry Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital.

142. Braverman, 90-110.

although somewhat fragmented. They were divided into unions according to craft - separate bodies existed for tinsmiths, blacksmiths, coachworkers, moulders, boilermakers, and less skilled workers. In addition, most (but not all) railway-employed metalworkers belonged to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.¹⁴³ The Amalgamated Society of Engineers competed with the other unions and was the largest, with 103 members, but was preoccupied with craft and benefit matters rather than with organising in the factory and for the Arbitration Court. Next largest, with 60 members, and probably the most effective of the metal unions, was the Iron and Brass Moulders' Union.¹⁴⁴

The Moulders did not neglect benefit or craft matters; indeed, they recognised the importance of sound technical knowledge and in 1905 resolved 'That a course of Instructive papers be arranged for each meeting where practicable to be delivered by the Various Foremen on Intricate Workings of the Trade'. These were not passively received, but were freely discussed by members.¹⁴⁵ Like the Boilermakers, the Moulders' Union was a highly skilled group of workers, but as a whole more vigorous in defending their interests. Moulders' Union meetings freely discussed breaches of the award when brought to their attention, rather than just accepting the executive's reports. Both unions were under some pressure on wages and skill. Cooper and Duncan's foundry in Christchurch was known to use labourers

143. Jack McCullough had helped organise the Tinsmiths' Union when he was employed at Addington; see Nolan, 7-16.

144. DoL Report, AJHR 1905, H-11A, 6.

145. IBM 24 Mar 1905, 28 Apr 1905.

on its moulding machine in 1905 while more highly-paid moulders were out of work; a few years later another firm making agricultural machinery cut its workforce by 134 in a year, despite bouyant trade.¹⁴⁶ The Boilermakers had a problem in 1907 with the Railways Department over an unqualified person working at Addington as a boilermaker.¹⁴⁷ The Moulders, however, recorded many more such problems than did the Boilermakers; there were numerous cases of unionists being sacked by employers prepared to defy the preference agreement, of short pay, and increasing use of payment by output.

The introduction of payment by output was strongly opposed by the Moulders' Union. In 1906 John Barr, the prominent Liberal unionist, noted that the 'American system' of speeding up the time allowed for each job had begun in local engineering workshops. It involved the introduction of timesheets and a low basic wage, with overtime a necessity, and the payment of 'bonuses' for 'fast' work.¹⁴⁸ In June 1907 P & D Duncan's agricultural machinery factory introduced a premium or bonus system. A special meeting of the union resolved to cite Duncan's for breach of the award,¹⁴⁹ but the workers had little protection. Piecework had been banned by the award until 1902 when it became legal on agreement 'in writing between the employer and workman and the secretary or president of the union.'¹⁵⁰ This was maintained in the 1908 award, despite the public dissent of

146. IBM 25 Aug 1905; LT 4 Feb 1911, 12.

147. BM 4, 18 June 1907.

148. LT 15 Sept 1906, 12.

149. IBM 18 June 1907.

150. BoA III, 492.

Jack McCullough, the Workers' Representative. According to the majority judgement, piecework and bonuses were 'in the interests of both employers and workers, and instead of being abolished should be encouraged...the claim made by the union representative that the worker should get the whole benefit of the saving effected by his extra work is quite unreasonable. Unless the employer is to get some benefit from the system in the shape of reduced cost of production he has little or no motive for adopting it'. The judgement quoted approvingly from the work of one Shadwell on Industrial Efficiency: 'The contention that it is degrading for a man to use his powers to the best advantage and get fairly paid for it is too contrary for reason to prevail long with any men but shirkers and dreamers. And if reason fails, economic pressure will enforce the principle'. This work had been cited during the hearing by George Booth, the employers' advocate.¹⁵¹ Booth, a power within the Canterbury Employers' Association, was himself a foundry-owner. In this hearing he presented clearly and concisely the attitude of employers to workers' opposition to schemes of 'efficiency'. For the workers, bonus systems were objectionable on a number of counts; the Moulders' Union had voted unanimously to reject bonus payments. They increased exploitation, doubling profit for minimal rises in the wage bill;¹⁵² they eroded workers' solidarity by introducing competition among workers; and they caused workers to work harder and therefore require more to eat.¹⁵³ After 1908 piecework was allowed in many awards without special

151. BoA IX, 444.

152. Press 24 June 1908, cited Nolan 79; IBM 18 Mar 1908.

153. This was testified to by Dan Sullivan in front of the Royal Commission on the Cost of Living in 1912.

agreement, so long as no worker was paid less than the minimum hourly rate. Tinsmiths were able to resist; their awards continued to ban bonus systems.¹⁵⁴ Their trade was a good deal more specialised and less vulnerable to the encroachment of machines than was the moulders'; one reason offered in his own defence by Jack McCullough when sacked from the Addington Workshops because of political activities was that as a tinsmith he had become so specialised that he could work at his trade nowhere else.¹⁵⁵

Bonus payments were not the only reverse suffered by the Moulders; the Arbitration Court consistently refused limitations of apprentices, which in other trades was done on a ratio of apprentices to qualified workers. This meant that employers had greater scope for getting work done on the cheap, and that apprentices' training would suffer. This would lead to further de-skilling of moulders' work. No metal trade award allowed for the limitation of apprentices. With piecework established, employers stepped up the pace of work considerably. This was noticed by the Moulders' Union in 1910 when 'A considerable amount of discussion...took place on driving in shops and members out of work'.¹⁵⁶ The pressure on skill took shape in other forms too; machine moulders were put on a lower rate of pay from 1908; they got 1'1½ per hour, compared to 1'3 for the more skilled. Even so, P & D Duncan found reason to employ labourers on moulding machines at one shilling an hour,¹⁵⁷ and this became common. Clearly, the implementation of bonus payments had been

154. BoA IX, 385; XII, 892.

155. LT 18 Oct 1907, 9.

156. IBM 26 Aug 1910.

157. BoA IX, 444; IBM 28 Oct 1910, 25 Nov 1910.

of decisive importance in the employers' drive to de-skill and to control. As well as piece rates, or in their place, Christchurch employers had an 'exertion standard', by which workers had to attain a certain level of output in order to qualify for the minimum wage. If a worker did not reach this standard, dismissal was the result. Bonuses were paid for output above the level; some unions had fought the system, but without success. Employers did, however, complain of a lower output than in Britain or America; some had also observed that piece rates had not increased output. They suspected 'a union element'.¹⁵⁸ Unions tried to resist, to maintain their traditional control. The Boilermakers' Union and the Tinsmiths and Sheetmetal Workers Union had problems in 1912 with boilermakers at one foundry doing sheet-metal work for less than the award rate.¹⁵⁹ The action was deplored, but it is likely that, unemployment being high, the workers concerned felt they had little choice. The higher levels of unemployment after 1908 undoubtedly helped the employers in their campaign against unions' control in the workplace.

In the boot and clothing trades, however, employers did not have to wait so long for a chance to impose greater control in the factories. Even before 1900 the Arbitration Court was denying any such role to the unions; in the 1895 Bootmakers' Award it was decreed that employers could 'introduce machinery at any time without notice and...divide or subdivide the labour in connection with such machinery as may be necessary....No

158. LT 23 Apr 1910.

159. BM 23 Jul 1912, 31 Jul 1912.

restriction shall be placed upon the output of any machine or with the method of working such machine'.¹⁶⁰. However, some protection was given to skill: the splitting-up of hand work into different tasks on a team-system was forbidden. Piecework was allowed at the manufacturer's option.¹⁶¹. In the clothing trades, similar conditions prevailed. In 1902 the Woollen-Mills Employees' Union applied for the abolition of piecework, and this was rejected by the Court; it would have added £11 000 to a wages bill of £25 000 in the Canterbury district. Unlike most clothing and boot trade awards, this one made no limitations on youth workers and gave no preference of employment to unionists.¹⁶². Most clothing-trade awards also required a fair 'distribution of work and banned doing work outside the workshop.'¹⁶³.

Through most of the period to 1912, there was less scope in the clothing and boot trades for deskilling by the introduction of new technology than in the metal trades. Employers used other means to increase profitability; most notable was the system of permits for workers to go under the minimum wage. In 1906 the Board of Conciliation heard a great number of applications for such permits in the clothing trade; over 100 cases were set down in February. One young woman was refused employment because she declined to accept less than the minimum wage, at one factory employing 234 workers (presumably Kaiapoi), there were 31 apprentices, 43 improvers - workers just out of their time, - 75 workers at full pay, and 76 workers classified as incompetent.

160. BoA I, 200.

161. BoA II, 191.

162. BoA III, 506.

163. BoA IV, 185.

'The latter are experienced workers who have to accept less than the minimum wage stipulated by the award'. The arbitration system offered little protection; at one hearing, eighteen permits out of 29 applications were instantly granted; fourteen out of 23 at another; and 90 out of 95 at a third. In May a further 39 out of 56 were granted¹⁶⁴. - a total of 161 clothing workers, chiefly women, who had served an apprenticeship and were entitled to regard themselves as competent journeywomen, were placed on rates of pay below that agreed on in the award. This was the largest assault on workers' wages conducted in Christchurch in this period, and the arbitration system was the instrument. Employers were assisted in this attack on wages by 'the state of the labour market; clothing firms, especially Kaiapoi, had recently been arranging for the immigration of many workers and laying off more highly paid journeywomen.¹⁶⁵

Kaiapoi was one firm which was able to use new technology to further increase the rate of exploitation; in 1906 new machinery saved 35% on the wage-bill, as a proportion of total turnover. This was despite a 15 to 20% increase in the amount of wages paid out.¹⁶⁶ The new machinery enabled the introduction of the team system, where several workers had the manufacture of a garment divided between them. Kaiapoi often under-paid workers as a matter of course, in not observing the piecework log; this practice, combined with the immigration contracts, represented a major attack on such protection as workers had through their

164. LT 7 Feb 1906, 7; 9 Feb 1906, 4, 6; 13 Feb 1906, 4; 14 Feb 1906, 3; 19 May 1906, 8.

165. See above, p28.

166. LT 25 Aug 1906, 4; 19 Feb 1906, 2.

union.¹⁶⁷ The city's Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union opposed such attacks on wages and skill through the arbitration system; 170 of the union's 250 members attended a special meeting held when Kaiapoi sacked four unionist pressers and kept one non-unionist.¹⁶⁸ The union's effectiveness was hampered, however, by its total reliance on the arbitration system and its incorporation into the Canterbury Liberal party until well after 1908 - Harry Ell was the union's long serving president in 1905.

The union's unwillingness to challenge or question the arbitration system meant that when the organs of that system handed out or ratified attacks on wages, there was no comeback. Some women however, refused to accept work on permit rates; the union supported them morally and financially but did not co-ordinate resistance of this sort.¹⁶⁹ It was left to individual workers to decide whether they wished to get locked out in this way; there is no record that the union ever considered striking.

Apart from their Liberal politics, tailoresses and pressers could have easily been replaced by nonunion workers; employers had steadily undermined their position by flooding the labour market. By 1908 the union was able to enforce the award in some cases of breaches of wages; employers sometimes settled and asked not to be taken to court. The union had some more energetic organisers by then.¹⁷⁰ The Tailoresses' and Pressers' was one of the few unions which had a majority of women on its committee, although the most senior positions were usually held by men like Harry Ell and Jim Thorn.

167. T&P Jan 1905 & 7 Feb 1905.

168. T&P 31 Aug 1905.

169. T&P 26 Mar 1907.

170. e.g. T&P 8 Sept 1908, 1 Dec 1908.

The Tailoring Trades Union contained a majority of males in its membership; it was about the same size as the Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union, and had major problems with skill dilution. Employers often took orders in their tailoring shops for 'tailor-made' clothing and then sent these orders out to factories or to outworkers to be filled. Although this practice was illegal, it was also common. In 1908 the Tailoring Trade Union set up a fighting fund for the purpose of getting such employers to court and having them convicted. It was also resolved 'that members be urged to set aside all scabminded objections, so that the trade may be kept in the proper channells and tradesmen be enabled to earn an honest living.¹⁷¹ Shortly afterwards, "Mr. Warrington of Lyttelton attended in response to invitation and said that he had carried work for Mr. Johnson of Lyttelton to Miss Laurence of Lichfield Street where it had been made up'. It was resolved to take proceedings.¹⁷² The Tailoring Trade Union's members had the same problems with employment as many other workers; employers took advantage of this. The Farmers' Co-operative Store, for instance, put journeywomen on short time and kept apprentices on fulltime; all clothing trade awards allowed short time.¹⁷³ The Tailoring Trade Union had unsuccessfully resisted the introduction of short time in the 1906 award. The Tailors' Union also enforced fair work practices among its own members; it investigated the case of one man at Strange and Co. who was reputed to be taking work home.¹⁷⁴ This union was one of the few which was able to more or less resist attacks on the skill of its members; even as late as 1912 the award for

171. TT 19 Feb 1908.

172. TT 22 Apr 1908.

173. TT 3 Jul, 25 Jul 1908; 15 Aug 1906, '5.

174. TT 24 Mar 1909.

shop tailors and tailoresses stated that 'Each worker shall make his or her own job from start to finish (except the machining, which may be done by a machinist). Should the job be wanted in a hurry temporary assistance shall be allowed'.¹⁷⁵. Tailors had one of the strongest preference clauses in their awards, giving the union a certain amount of time to replace with a unionist any non-unionist taken on. They shared this with other highly-skilled workers such as printers, furniture workers, and bakers. It was the tailors' high level of skill which kept them in a relatively strong position in the workplace. Woollen mill employees, who worked mainly with machines, had a severe cut in pay compared to output in 1912. It had become possible for one weaver to work two looms; the Arbitration Court in 1912 cut piecework rates for such workers by between 15% and 33 1/3%.¹⁷⁶.

The Operative Bootmakers' Union also had to watch its regulation of the work process disappear. Although this union was one of the first to get a strong preference clause, giving it up to 12 weeks to replace a non-unionist, the 1901 award also stated that 'Every employer is entitled to the fullest control over the management of his factory (and) to make such regulations as he deems necessary for time-keeping and good order'. In 1905, the unions' fines for breaking its timekeeping regulations were disallowed by the Arbitration Court;¹⁷⁷ unions were denied the right to control how fast their members worked. With employers using new machinery, piece-rates, and speeding-up to increase

175. BoA XIV, 402.

176. BoA XIII, 177.

177. BoA II, 213; OB 25 Jan 1905.

profitability or exploitation per worker, the denial of unions' rights in this area was something of a setback. Unions in many trades had long set such rules to maintain workers' shares of the value produced and to protect workers' health; such rights had to go if 'scientific management' was to be imposed.

Later in 1905 the union tried to lessen the effects of opening the trade to unskilled labour by offering a wage rise in return for conceding the point. This was at first refused by the employers.¹⁷⁸ The offer had been made in a national conference; boot trade unions were among the first to organise on a national level in an attempt to match the employers' power. At a second conference, the federated union got its wage rise, to a guaranteed minimum of one shilling an hour.¹⁷⁹ The employers continued to cut wage costs, however; one factory, Skelton, Frostick, and Co. (whose owner was a leading light in the Canterbury Employers' Association) laid a number of young women off over the Christmas period in 1908. These workers had been induced to emigrate from Britain on the promise of £1 10 per week. Later in 1909 Skelton Frostick took to sacking women active in the union and replacing them with apprentices and nonunion labour.¹⁸⁰ The next year a number of female apprentices were sacked for two days to avoid the necessity for holiday pay. The union resolved that 'parents or guardians who are sending their girls to learn the Boot Trade be urged to see that they are engaged as 1st or 2nd class apprentices otherwise they will be employed as in the 3rd class and the employers will not

178. OB 4 Oct 1905.

179. OB 13 Nov 1905.

180. OB 11, 27 Jan 1909, 23 June 1909.

teach them the trade and may discharge them at any time by giving them 24 hours notices'. Such practices were widespread, but the law did not define holiday layoffs as lockouts.¹⁸¹ Skelton Frostick and other employers continued the practice, and the union could do little. It was also noticed in 1910, according to James Young, an official in the union, that the pace of work in the boot trade had been increased.¹⁸² Permits for under-rate work were also a problem; in 1912 Bob Whiting, the national secretary of the Federated Boot Trades Union, wrote to all unions 'urging the utmost caution, on the part of the President and Secretary in the granting of under rate permits, which should as far as possible be confined to aged or infirm persons'.¹⁸³ There is no record, however, that employers made as much use of such permits as did those in the clothing trade.

Workers in the building trades had similar experiences to those involved in manufacturing clothing and boots. Preference was given to the carpenters and joiners' unions¹⁸⁴ as early as 1897, and the Painters' Union award of that year required that employers give the union 24 hours' notice before engaging non-union workers.¹⁸⁵ Painting was the only building-trade in which apprentices were limited in proportion to journeymen; all awards except the furniture workers' banned piecework. In 1906 a clause was inserted in the furniture trades award forbidding workers to 'make goods for sale on their own account while in

181. OB 21 May 1910, 25 May 1910.

182. LT 15 Oct 1910, 2.

183. OB 24 Jul 1912.

184. There were two: the ASCJ and the Canterbury Carpenters' and Joiners' Union, which had seceded from the ASCJ decades earlier. I found no record of why this occurred, but relations between the two seem to have been friendly enough in this period.

185. BoA I, 207, 215.

the full-time employment of any employer'.¹⁸⁶. Employers were apparently concerned about workers competing with them; the effect of this clause was to render a workers' entire skill and knowledge the property of the employer, rather than the worker merely alienating this skill for a certain time per day. In 1908 joiners working in factories became required to work an extra hour before qualifying for overtime, and piecework was allowed by agreement in each case. The workers' representative on the Court, Jack McCullough, publicly dissented from the extra hour.¹⁸⁷.

The introduction of piecework for joiners may have resulted from new production techniques or machinery, but generally the scope of employers in these trades was limited as far as technology was concerned. As in most New Zealand industries, profitability was increased by less subtle methods. Plasterers and stonemasons, the most highly-paid building tradesmen, enjoyed a great deal of protection because of their skill; their unions were also among the most conservative in Christchurch. Carpenters and furniture workers made some advances in later years; piecework was banned in the furniture trade from 1908 and in 1911 carpenters and joiners had apprentice-ratios set and got stronger preference clauses.¹⁸⁸. Thus workers' fortunes in these trades fluctuated, depending perhaps only on the skill of their advocates before the Arbitration Court.

In 1908, Jack McCullough, newly elected as workers' represen-

186. BoA VII, 245.

187. BoA IX, 432.

188. BoA IX, X, 594; XII, 899; XIII

tative, had been most concerned at the poor quality of many workers' advocates. He deplored their lack of effective presentation and factual evidence; at the same time, employers were conducting a nationally-coordinated campaign to secure Court awards that fitted the new doctrines of efficiency.

Employers in the building trades used the same tactics as most others to get around the provisions of awards. Plasterers had problems with an excess of under-rate workers; indeed, this was the single most common offence for which employers were cited before the Arbitration Court in the years 1904 to 1907, and it remained common thereafter.¹⁸⁹ The Plasterers' Union accordingly declined to issue any more permits for under-rate work as long as it had unemployed tradesmen on the books; like most unions they were entirely unimpressed by Government plans to remove this matter from unions' jurisdiction and give it to the Department of Labour.¹⁹⁰ This Union conceded piecework as long as the award wage was paid - probably it recognised that it had little chance of stopping the introduction of such payments and preferred to keep at least the appearance of control.¹⁹¹

The furniture workers also had problems with the loss of skill. In 1905 a number of employers were not teaching their apprentices properly, and the Furniture Trades Union took legal advice on the matter. One such apprentice had served part of his time in store and packing work, and the Union had with regret to refuse him an under-rate permit 'in justice to its members'.¹⁹²

189. See Nolan, 47-56.

190. OP 10 June 1908; Nolan, 66.

191. OP 24 June 1908; 30 Sept 1908.

192. FT 2 Aug 1905, 5 Dec 1906.

A number of employers were proceeded against for having too many boys or apprentices in 1907, and in 1908 the union refused to grant a permit for a worker to operate sandpapering machines. The employer proposed to pay one shilling an hour, labourers' pay, instead of the journeyman's 1'3 per hour.¹⁹³. There seems to have been less friction between employers and workers in this trade after 1908. The union recorded fewer breaches of the award; and in 1909 it resolved to forego a strict use of the 'Unions' employment book if employers promised to strictly observe preference. The union 'desire(d) that those harmonious relations at present existing should continue' in the workplace.¹⁹⁴. Furniture workers, like some others, were to a degree protected from the effects of the efficiency campaign by their high level of skill.

Labourers enjoyed no such protection. They did not even have a strong union in the city in 1905; the General Labourers' Union had just 68 members. Five years later it had over 1000.¹⁹⁵. This remarkable growth was in large part due to the efforts of two of the Union's officials, Arthur Paterson and Edwin Howard. Ted Howard was one of the most dynamic of the city's union activists; he was also before 1914 one of its most radical, espousing a form of organisation known as industrial unionism. Put simply, this strategy consisted of relying on the numerical strength and the unity of organised workers. Skilled workers were to some extent able to rely on the scarcity of their skills in order to maintain their position in society; the policies of

193. FT 25 Mar 1908.

194. FT 15 Dec 1909.

195. DoL Report, AJHR 1905, H-11, 6; LT 11 Feb 1910, 7.

their organisations, known as craft unions, reflected this. Labourers had no such skill protection; as we have seen, in times of unemployment they were most vulnerable to lay off and low wages. The constant surplus of labourers, both urban and agricultural, meant that a strong organisation was imperative if decent wages and conditions were to be gained.

The first attempts to organise Canterbury's farm labourers were made in 1903 when the Canterbury TLC held a public meeting to reveal the poor wages and bad conditions prevailing for farm workers.¹⁹⁶ Shortly afterwards a farm workers' union was formed. Among its leading members was Ted Kennedy, who was sacked by nine farmers before 1907 for his activities; this and other similar experiences made outside help necessary. Offices in the union were usually held by Christchurch activists. Jim Thorn and Jack McCullough were therefore asked to assist in organising, which they did by individual canvassing and numerous enthusiastic public meetings.¹⁹⁷ The working conditions, accommodation, and wages have been mentioned above.¹⁹⁸ The majority of farmers were entirely hostile to the unionisation of workers, and the organisers had a difficult time.¹⁹⁹ Individual workers were also liable to be abused by their employers. In the hearings before the Conciliation Board, in which the Farm Labourers' Union and the Farmers' Union disputed over whether an award should be granted; one worker related how his boss had kicked him for an unspecified offence. Kennedy replied, 'Do you mean to say your boss kicked you and you did not hit back, and you call

196. LT 28 Jul 1903, cited Nolan 31.

197. Nolan, 32.

198. See pp 40.

199. Nolan, 32.

yourself an Irishman?' - 'He was master, and I was only man', was the worker's response. 'Never mind that', Kennedy said, 'you ought to have had a cut in. I'm ashamed for my country, that some of her blood runs in the veins of a man who would take a kick lying down',²⁰⁰.

The battle between the workers' union and the Farmers' Union was of somewhat more epic proportions. The Farm Labourers' Union hoped and intended to get legal recognition of its claims by an Arbitration Court award; the employers were equally determined that no such award should be given.²⁰¹ The dispute was heard over many months in 1907 and 1908. The labourers' case was presented by Jim Thorn and Ted Kennedy; they were assisted by Ettie Rout, who had worked as a shorthand typist and instructor. The FLU contended that rural workers were entitled to the same legal rights and protection as other workers, and required an award in order to enforce the improvement of pay and conditions. The Farmers' Union countered with evidence that farm work was of such a nature that it could not be regulated, and with claims that only slackers needed the protection of a union or an award anyway. This was becoming commonplace in employers' rhetoric. The North Canterbury Farmers' Union had in 1906 affiliated to the Canterbury Employers' Association; clearly, Canterbury's employers intended to prevent the further growth of unionism.²⁰² The Canterbury Sheepowners' Union had tried to get the Otago Employers' Association secretary and

200. LT 17 Jan 1908, 7.

201. For a full account of the dispute, see Brendan Thompson, 'The Canterbury Farm Labourers' Dispute'.

202. Nolan, 73-4, 68.

advocate, William Scott, to conduct the case; he was known as the best employers' advocate in the country. He was unavailable so two of their own members, Henry Acland and Richard Evans, acted, in conjunction with David Jones of the Farmers' Union. Jim Thorn was also an experienced advocate, but to no avail. The Arbitration Court, in a judgement in August 1908, refused to grant an award; it held that

the Union has failed to prove any substantial grievances or abuse amongst farm labourers generally that would justify the interference of the Court with the whole farming industry of Canterbury... (An Award) would be difficult of enforcement, and nothing less than a whole army of inspectors would be required to enforce effectually the provisions of such an award.

In view of this fact, of the magnitude also of the interests involved, both directly and indirectly, in this dispute, and of the serious results to not only the farming industry, but indirectly to the prosperity of the whole dominion that might flow from the exercise of its power of regulation, the Court should not interfere unless the necessity for doing so has been clearly made out...²⁰³.

The decision brought unanimous protests from unions and the Political Labour League; Jack McCullough recorded his dissent in the strongest terms. But the employers of Canterbury had won a major victory. Acland and Evans were toasted by the CEA, which expressed the opinion that a 'civil war' was being fought between 'right minded New Zealanders and Socialist union agitators'.²⁰⁴.

The employers had succeeded in blocking the unionisation of a very large number of workers involved in the country's chief economic activity. This was an important battle in the fight for control, and the unions' defeat meant that the lot of farm workers remained poor. Many workers, through their unions,

203. LT 22 Aug 1908, 1.

204. Quoted Nolan, 74.

expressed opinions on the case which showed a sense of outrage. It was becoming clear that the arbitration institutions ultimately, and often openly, existed to serve the interests of the capitalist class.

This had been perceived by slaughtermen right across the country early in 1907, and by shearers in 1910. These workers, who were also crucial to the New Zealand economy, had a lot in common. Their work, although not formally skilled, was difficult and sometimes dangerous. It was also seasonal, and the nature of the work meant that a strong solidarity developed among the workers. Meatworkers congregated in large works, and shearers travelled together. Unionism was strong among both groups of workers.

The slaughtermen's success was chiefly in the use of strikes to gain wage rises. In 1907 this was unheard of. The slaughtermen demanded a rise of 25%, up to 25 shillings per hundred sheep. At the time the Slaughtermen's Union made its claim, profits in the meat-exporting industry were high. Efficiency had been increased by electrification at Belfast; this had seen ten men replaced by a conveyor belt that transported carcasses to trucks, and other skilled machinery-attendants had lost their jobs.²⁰⁵. The strike began in Wellington in mid-February and spread to Canterbury a few days later. Its outbreak in Canterbury was preceded by rumours of trouble; a number of slaughtermen had a short stoppage at one works in early February for undisclosed

reasons: bonus payments had been increased but the basic rate stayed at 20 shillings per hundred.²⁰⁶ By the end of February a national strike was shaping up; in Canterbury at least, the strike was organised by the rank and file against the wishes of the union leadership. One hundred and fifty slaughtermen from the Belfast and Islington works met at Trades Hall; the 'discussion was of a very vigorous character'. According to the Lyttelton Times the meeting was split between the younger men, mostly Australians, who had 'no settled interests in New Zealand, and no experience of the workings of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act' and the older ones, including the union officials, who 'desired to avoid a strike and protested against any hasty and ill-considered action'. The mood of the meeting was clearly militant; at one stage the union officials were asked to leave.²⁰⁷ One reason voiced by strikers in support of their action was, in fact, that the 'workings of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act' would not do them justice, by delaying a hearing and outlawing the right to strike. One slaughterman referred to the difficulty and unpleasantness of the work, 'just brute force, until the skin wears off the ends of a chap's fingers and leaves them raw. I've seen a man hold his hand up and let the blood drip down from the end of each finger - his own blood, not the sheep's....And we get some cuts - My word! we get some cuts, and they don't heal too good. Then we are out of work, and no compensation from anyone'. Work was uneven; a good worker could get up to £6 a week, but on ten to twelve hour days and very fast work. Then a load of tough old rams could slow

206. LT 14 Feb 1907, 7.

207. LT 25 Feb 1907, 8.

things right down. 'Somebody has to do the work, and it's come our way. But we don't love it'.²⁰⁸ Good workers could get up to £9 a fortnight, when at work; this meant no more than £100 a year, or seven shillings a day, and relying on seasonal labouring in the winter, when such work was hard to find.

'Tell me, is that enough for a bloke with a wife and family, and doctors' bills and other expenses to meet?' Obviously, many of the older, settled workers also supported the strike; as well as the one just quoted, another reckoned he could do with a week in his garden.²⁰⁹ All members of the union, including the officials, joined the strike. On 27 February all five Canterbury works were out.

The freezing companies threatened the strikers with retaliation through the Arbitration Court, and the Minister of Labour, John Andrew Millar (erstwhile leader of the 1890 Maritime Strike) gave orders to prosecute the strikers. This caused them little concern: 'We're not frightened of the Arbitration Court. It hasn't done anything for us, and why should we be bound by it? They say that the Court can fine us, but it can't get anything out of me'. The companies also planned to find strikebreakers among the 'casual labour class', and as soon as the strike was on, began to ask the police for protection. This likewise did not worry the strikers; it took 12 months for a slaughterman to become expert. 'A man with some natural aptitude in the use of his fingers would pick up the system in a few hours, and for perhaps three days would get along well. Then

208. LT 26 Feb 1907, 7-8.

209. Ibid: 2 Mar 1907, 9; 27 Feb 1907, 7.

he would have to go off while his hands healed', as one Islington worker pointed out.²¹⁰ A few casuals were taken on at the various works, but as the strikers had expected, few were competent. Numerous farmers offered labour, but since the harvest was in full swing, few could make good their offer. The strikers' timing was perfect.

Negotiations began after ten days. Fines of £5 each imposed on 150 strikers failed to make much impression on them. The freezing companies demanded that the dispute be referred to the Arbitration Court - when the chips were down, the employers knew whence came their help. The union, having been given authority to negotiate, wanted the matter settled by agreement, and stuck to the demand of 25 shillings. The union's position was that 'the employers and the men know more about the business than the men who compose the Court, and therefore we think that we are in a better position to make an industrial agreement than the Court is to make an award'. As well as a wage rise, the workers demanded fixed hours and a clear definition of slaughtermen's work, proper changing facilities, pens for the sheep, and payment for time spent hanging around. The employers broke the negotiations off; they were not prepared to consider an industrial agreement made outside the Court.²¹¹ Four days later the union, at a stormy meeting, decided to accept Thomas Davey and George Witty, two Christchurch Liberal MPs, as mediators. They got nowhere until the union gave them power to conclude an agreement; the employers had agreed to make a deal outside

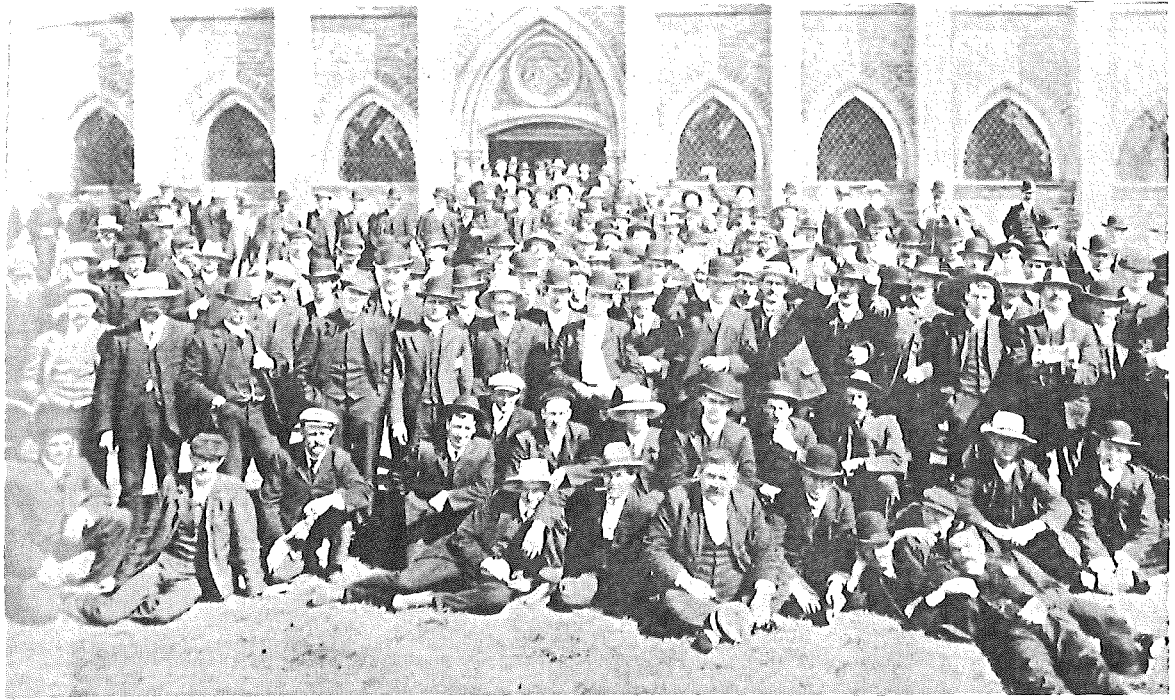
²¹⁰. LT 27 Feb 1907, 7.

²¹¹. LT 8 Mar 1907, 7, 8.

The Slaughtermen's Strike, 1907.

Top: a group of strikers outside the Supreme Court after Mr. Justice Sim had fined them £5 each. The union executive accepted the fines, but many of the men did not pay.

Bottom: union delegates who attempted to settle the dispute.
Upper row from left: E. Hodge (Fairfield); J. Duane (Pareora); J.B. Pope (President); Lower row from left: J. Catherall (Belfast); V. Parkes (Smithfield); G. Finn (Islington).



the Court.^{212.}

The result was a near-total victory for the strikers. They got 23 shillings per hundred, two shillings less than demanded, but all other claims were agreed to. The employers professed to be happy, but they had suffered a reverse: through picking the right moment to strike, the slaughtermen had extracted a significant payrise and a much greater amount of control over their working conditions. What was more, the first major revolt against the working of the arbitration system had been carried off. The union delegates were heartily cheered by their comrades. Davey and Witty were given a testimonial smoke concert, 'Many fines were unpaid years later.'^{213.}

The slaughtermen remained in a strong position. Three years later, having federated the local unions into the New Zealand Federated Slaughtermen, they demanded an eight hour day (down from nine) and 25 shillings per hundred. Two week's notice to strike was given; negotiations on pay had collapsed because the employers were not prepared to consider a reduction in hours. The Federation refused to consider the Conciliation Council's suggestion of referring the matter to assessors from each side, preferring to 'choose its own weapons of defence'. The local unions unanimously boycotted the Conciliation Council from then on. The Canterbury union gave due notice to the employers; it considered the demand 'a very reasonable one and trusted that the employers would be able to see their way to accede to it'.^{214.}

212. LT 12 Mar 1907, 7, 8; 15 Mar 1907, 7.

213. LT 16 Mar 1907, 9.

214. LT 7 Jan 1910, 9; 8 Jan 1910, 9; 10 Jan 1910, 9.

The frozen meat companies and the Canterbury union met in conference shortly after the demands were made, and after three days' negotiations it was announced that the slaughtermen had their 8 hour day and 25 shillings per hundred. The new agreement gave preference to unionists and also provided that all learners be members of the union.²¹⁵ Employers in other provinces followed suit; the slaughtermen's timing and organisation had again been perfect. This time there was no public mention of strike-breaking.

The success of the slaughtermen was followed up by the shearers a few months later. These workers had been relatively well-organised for some years. In 1908 their organisation had been dealt something of a blow by the Arbitration Court in its award. Perhaps as a result of the defiance of the Court by the Blackball strikers, Judge Sim began to insert a new clause into some awards. This clause was first imposed on the Southland Sawmill Workers' Union (who had threatened a strike at the beginning of 1908); it stated that the workers' union would automatically be regarded as responsible for any strike that occurred, and the award would be suspended over the whole district to which it applied for the duration of any such strike. In the Canterbury Shearers' Union award, brought down at the same time, it was stated that the award would be suspended after a strike ended, 'until the further order of this Court'.²¹⁶ This amounted to instant deregistration and was the Court's answer to the shearers' demand for better pay and conditions. The union had repeated its demands of 1905 for 20 shillings per hundred

215. LT 15 Jan 1910, 10; BoA XI, 18.

216. LT 9 Sept 1908, 5; 10 Sept 1908, 5.

sheep and various other changes, including the election of a workers' representative in each shed to mediate disputes with the employer, and the right of the shearers to refuse to shear sheep that they deemed to be wet. The Sheepowners' Union protested that the shearers had 'adopted the tactics of the coalminers in an endeavour either to increase the wages or to secure control of the work. If this was countenanced, employers would be compelled to adopt similar tactics'.²¹⁷.

In May 1910 the Sheepowners' Union filed for a new award, the 1908 one having expired. They caught the Shearers' Union napping by getting in first, and intended to get the ruling rate of 18 shillings per hundred cut by sixpence. The Lyttelton Times commented that this was such a paltry sum that a political motive was to be suspected;²¹⁸. possibly, organised employers were out for revenge for the capitulation forced on them by the slaughtermen four months previously. It may also be likely that the Sheepowners' Union intended to break the Shearers' Union by imposing a pay cut. The Shearers' Union presented counter claims of 20 shillings per hundred and all board provided, and a 48 hour week. The union's idea of proper food was detailed; it included oatmeal, tea, coffee, sugar, flour, rice, sago currants, raisins, salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar, milk, vegetables, mutton, beef, baking powder, and baking-soda. The union also sought to keep the existing system whereby shearers in each shed elected a representative to resolve disputes with the management. The union wanted the award extended to all shedhands; it

²¹⁷. LT 1 Jul 1908, 6.

²¹⁸. LT 7 May 1910, 11; 11 May 1910, 6.

regarded these as the worst-paid workers in the country.²¹⁹ Employers began a stone-wall in the Conciliation Council hearings, and by the beginning of June the Shearers' Union decided to take matters into their own hands. Otago and Wellington announced that they would not shear until an award was made. Shortly afterwards all North Island unions, including the all-Maori Gisborne-based Northern Shearers' and Woolshed Employees' Union, resolved not to shear anywhere for less than 20 shillings per hundred. South Island unions followed suit. Mick Laracy, the union's national secretary, told the Minister of Labour that the rate had been 20 shillings many years ago and had been cut by a quarter. Most North Island shearers were on that rate in 1910; it was the South Island shearers who wanted to catch up. All along the Shearers' Unions maintained that they were not striking, but merely taking literally the advice of Judge Sim that no one had to work if they didn't like the wages.²²⁰ The unions refused to move from 20 shillings; the employers refused to negotiate an agreement for shed-hands. A Conciliation Council hearing in September got nowhere; the Sheepowners were represented by William Pryor of the Canterbury Employers' Association and he spent most of the time getting annoyed about the workers' resolutions to stick to 20 shillings. The Shearers' Canterbury secretary, Mr. Waddell, made what he termed a 'sporting offer': the employers should settle for 20 shillings, or the union would up the demand to 22'6. He threatened that if the offer was not accepted, Australian shearers would refuse to come over; that was indeed likely.²²¹ Laracy kept the Australian Workers' Union

219. LT 20 May 1910, 8; 7 May 1910, 11; LT 4 Oct 1905, 4.

220. LT 11 June 1910, 9; 21 June 1910, 9; 8 July 1910, 5.

221. LT 14 Sept 1910, 9; 16 Sept 1910, 9.

fully informed. The Red Federation of Labour weighed in with offers of support.²²²

The Arbitration Court made its award in September. It gave 19'6 per hundred for machine shearing (which was faster) and 20 shillings for blade shearing. The award also declared that 'No worker is bound to work at these rates, and he is at liberty to stipulate for higher rates. If, however, workers acting in combination refuse to work with a view of obtaining a higher rate, that will constitute the offence of taking part in a strike'.²²³ 'Acting in combination' may have been more difficult to prove than Sim and the Employers' Representative on the Court had hoped; shearers continued to refuse to take less than 20 shillings all round, and over the next few weeks farmers conceded that rate of pay. The same factors of organisation, timing, solidarity, and skill that had given victories to the slaughtermen operated to the shearers' benefit. The shed-hands got their award in 1911, a form of protection still not enjoyed by other rural workers. It gave a basic rate of 11 pence per hour or £1 7 6 per week, plus board.²²⁴ It was better than nothing.

Shearers and slaughtermen were able to use their organisation and their skill to keep a large measure of autonomy in the workplace and to win significant improvements in pay and conditions. Ordinary agricultural labourers did not have these advantages, and neither did urban labourers. The first award for Christchurch

222. LT 26 Sept 1910, 7; 27 Sept 1910, 7.

223. LT 26 Sept 1910, 7.

224. BoA XIII, 919.

labourers came in 1908 and applied to grainstore workers. It did little more than set hours and wages, but was important to the Canterbury Employers' Association; McCullough noted the presence at the hearing of 'Jones, Evans, Ackland and a number of other big guns'.²²⁵ This was a further sign of the increased co-ordination between employers in Canterbury. The General Labourers' Union had its biggest fights, however, not with private-sector employers but with municipal bodies. Ideas of efficiency and managerial dictatorship were not limited to commercial operations.

The first major dispute between the GLU and the City Council was over the right of the Council's 80 labourers to be represented by the union. Local bodies had generally been exempted from union awards on the grounds that their function was a non-profitmaking one. In April 1910 the GLU asked the Council to receive a deputation on wages and conditions. Although the Council's workers were all members of the union and had asked it to negotiate on their behalf, the Council refused to receive any deputation other than from its own employees. The Council therefore refused to recognise the workers' right to choose their own representatives, and by insisting on a deputation from the workers themselves, hoped to intimidate them into keeping quiet. The immediate matters at issue were chiefly holidays; in return for accepting a 48 hour week, instead of the award's 44 hours, the workers had been given eight paid holidays per year. A few of the workers had asked for treble time for Christmas Day, and the Council retaliated by cutting hours to 44 per week, which

²²⁵. Quoted Nolan, 74.

meant a loss of pay of seven shillings, and also by revoking double time for holidays. The workers had been trying for three months to get redress; when the Council meeting resolved not to hear a GLU deputation, there was an instant demonstration in the street outside, addressed by Cr Tommy Taylor, Christchurch's best-known radical Liberal, as well as Ted Howard and Arthur Paterson. According to Howard, the Council had expressed an intention to break the General Labourers' Union; the Council's use of a minor dispute to worsen wages and conditions, and its refusal to recognise the Union, made this seem likely. Even the Lyttelton Times called the Council's action 'simply outrageous'.²²⁶

At a later meeting the Council reaffirmed its refusal to deal with the GLU. The Mayor, Charles Allison, 'thought that the claims made on behalf of the men, considering the circumstances, were extortionate. The disposition of the Council had always been to treat its workmen liberally, and, in view of that, the Council had regarded the attitude adopted by them from the outset as one of ingratitude'. Precisely why the workers should be grateful for a weekly wage of 41 shillings, which was what they had after their hours had been cut, Allison did not say. Two hundred demonstrated outside; their numbers included some women, presumably labourers' wives.²²⁷ The City Council won that round, however; after ten weeks the GLU decided to take no further action in trying to get its deputation heard, but warned the Councillors to watch out at election time. The union promised

226. LT 19 Apr 1910, 6; 20 Apr 1910, 6, 9.

227. LT 3 May 1910, 9.

a major effort to enrol voters and elect Councillors who would be more sympathetic to unionism.²²⁸.

The next municipal elections were not until April 1911. Many unions put a great deal of effort into registering voters; their efforts were the more necessary because a recent law had granted voting rights to all residents of municipalities, without any property qualification. This had increased the roll by half. The General Labourers' Union was not the only one fighting the incumbent Council; the Drivers' Union was also engaged in a dispute over the payment of overtime, or rather the lack of it. Council drivers were paid less than those in other employment. The Council had tried in 1910 to cut daily wages to six shillings; it had counted on high unemployment to force workers to accept this rate, but the Trades Council had persuaded it to desist from that intention, as its secretary pointed out in an article on the municipal elections. 'Checkmated upon that occasion, the City Council seized the first opportunity that presented itself to carry out its intention to reduce wages, not in the interests of the ratepayers, but for the benefit of large employers of labour generally'.²²⁹ The perception, which was entirely justified, of a Council that governed by and for the capitalist class, was one held by a very large number of working people in Christchurch. Tommy Taylor was elected Mayor of Christchurch with strong Labour support, and five Labour councillors accompanied him. Charles Allison got little more than one third of the vote; Taylor secured a handsome majority.²³⁰ There was

228. LT 5 Jul 1910, 3.

229. LT 22 Apr 1911, 12; TLC 2 April 1910, 30 Apr 1910.

230. See below, pp193-5.

jubilation in the streets.

This jubilation was shortlived. Tommy Taylor died suddenly after less than two months in office; he was succeeded by the markedly less radical Henry Holland, and Labour lost one of its six votes on the City Council. It had never had a majority anyway, and the other local bodies were generally still dominated by conservatives. Thus, when the General Labourers' Union began negotiations with local bodies for a wage rise to 1'1½ per hour (which would restore wages to their old level on shorter hours) in May 1911 it was outnumbered. The employers wanted a 47 hour week for one shilling an hour, and no pay for holidays; the union decided to refer the matter to the Arbitration Court. However, few of the union's members wished to give evidence before the Court, for fear of their jobs, so the union was obliged to accept the terms offered.²³¹ Labourers did not have the protection of a skill, and unemployment among their ranks was usually high. In this situation their bargaining power was not usually great; they even found it difficult to get smoko on Tramway Board Works.²³² The labourers' only strength was in numbers; the GLU was the largest in Christchurch and became even larger after it amalgamated with the Farm Labourers at the beginning of 1912. This sort of numerical strength was the only weapon the labourers had, and solidarity was all-important; the Auckland General Labourers' Union was broken in March 1912 when the local bodies succeeded in breaking the local body labourers off from the GLU. The Christchurch labourers stayed united, and

²³¹. LT 30 May 1911, 3; 27 June 1911, 6; GLU 31 Oct 1911.

²³². GLU 31 Oct 1911.

this helped them to negotiate a wage rise in 1913.²³³

Transport workers-drivers, watersiders, and tramway workers - were in a similar position to the general labourers. Their work was not regarded as highly skilled, although it did of course take some time to learn. These workers were, therefore, always vulnerable to replacement by others, and they depended on large and united organisations. Drivers were most like the general labourers in their conditions of work, in relations with employers, and in their union structure; watersiders had a considerable measure of control conceded to them and were among the most effective users of direct action; and the tramway workers had a constant and open fight with the municipal Tramway Board over wages, conditions, and control of work.

Tramway workers were among the last major group of Christchurch workers to organise; they did not form a union until 1906. The spur to form the union came over the system of merit and demerit points imposed by the Tramway Board in April 1906. Demerits could be given for a long list of offences: entering a publichouse in uniform, drinking on or immediately before duty, criticising the management in the presence of passengers, smoking on duty, unnecessary conversation, avoidable accidents, bad driving, being ahead of or behind time, missing fares, failing to start collecting fares promptly, rudeness to passengers, and many others.²³⁴ The workers held a number of protest meetings on the matter and sent a unanimous petition to the Board against

²³³. See below, p 231.

²³⁴. LT 29 Mar 1906, 8.

the system, but got nowhere. On the evidence of Auckland tramway workers, where such a system had been in operation for some time, the Christchurch men felt that it would be impossible to administer the system fairly. Inspectors would have to give demerits or the Board would suspect they were failing in their duty. It is also likely that money workers regarded the system as an insult.²³⁵ They circulated a petition and presented it to the Board, calling for their rights as free-born men to be recognised and questioning the need for the system. When the Board refused to meet their request, the tramway workers formed a union. They were initially supported by the CTLC, which warned that it 'could not consistently support or favour any strike (which)...was an uncivilised proceeding'. T. H. Davey, MHR, was also visible and he too urged that no strike be considered; his idea of a last resort action was the organising of public meetings - it seems from the advice against a strike that at least some of the workers were considering such action.²³⁶

The union's first action was to send a number of deputations to the Tramway Board on the merit system. None of them got anywhere; by the middle of the year the union turned its attention to proposing an award. The claims were modest indeed; a standard rate of one shilling per hour for motormen and 10½ pence for conductors, and a 54 hour week were the principal points; compulsory union membership was also proposed. These claims were presented to the Board in a conference.²³⁷ The Board apparently took little notice; four months later the Union wrote to 'urge upon the...Board...the desirability of resuming consideration' of

235. Ibid; LT 29 Mar 1906, 8; 30 Mar 1906, 5.

236. LT 31 Mar 1906, 2; TU 3 Apr 1906; LT 2 Apr 1906, 4.

237. TU 15 Jul 1906.

the proposals. Four weeks later an agreement was made.²³⁸ Among the points sought and won by the union was priority for promotion for its members; within four months the Board was breaking the agreement by appointing motormen from outside the union. This became a constant problem. The union communicated its displeasure to the Board, which didn't like the tone of the union's letters. So the matter rested.²³⁹ The union had little success in its other dealings with the Board; very minor modifications to the demerit system were obtained in 1907.²⁴⁰

Despite the frequent disputes with the Board, the Tramway Workers' Union adopted a fairly conservative attitude in its first few years of existence. It was one of the few unions which gave no financial support to Jack McCullough when he was sacked from the Railway Workshops in late 1907, and it supported his less aggressive rival for the workers' position on the Arbitration Court, the incumbent Robert Slater. At a farewell social for the Board's engineer in February 1908, at which 700 workers were present, the union secretary emphasised the goodwill supposedly existing between the Board and the workers.²⁴¹ The union believed that public support was essential to any success, and was careful not to alienate such support. This sustained moderation did not get the union very far. Auckland's tramway workers, in comparison, struck in 1906 and again in 1908. The grievances in both cases were unjustified dismissals.

The Christchurch union had a further dispute with the Board

238. TU 18 Nov, 16 Dec 1906.

239. TU 21 Apr, 23 Jun, 21 Jul 1907.

240. LT 3 Sept 1907, 4.

241. TU 15 Sept, 10 Nov 1907; LT 22 Feb 1908, 11.

in mid-1908. For a long time the Board had had a tough rule on conductors' takings: any deficit in the day's takings had to be made good by the conductor, but the Board kept any surplus. This, they argued, was because a surplus could only come from short-changing passengers or not issuing tickets. The union resolved to approach the Board on the matter. It was especially felt that overcrowding should be stopped, as this put conductors under a lot of pressure. For instance, on a busy tram a conductor did not have the time to engage in a dispute with a passenger about whether the fare had already been paid; it was easier to give the change that was demanded and proceed to other passengers.²⁴² When the Board rejected the union's approach, the workers voted to ban all standing on trams until the matter was settled. All union members were to be asked to sign a manifesto to this effect; some voices at the meeting called for a strike if anyone was suspended for this action.²⁴³ The Board remained firm and the union, in accordance with the advice of its national federation, decided to continue trying to persuade the Board and only take the 'extreme step' of a strike if that failed.²⁴⁴ The matter was never resolved; the Board remained stubborn. As a relatively less-skilled group of workers, without a tradition of job control, the tramwaymen could expect little help from the Arbitration Court in the matter. The union in fact made little use of the Arbitration Court; it spent some months in late 1908 and early 1909 in a series of conferences with the Board over payment conditions and secured a settlement

242. LT 23 May 1908, 9; 25 May 1908, 5, 8; 27 May 1908, 3;
TU 24 May 1908.

243. LT 8 June 1908, 8; TJ 7 June 1908.

244. LT 22 June 1908, 9.

that was rather unsatisfactory.²⁴⁵.

Most of the tramway workers' problems were over the control and allocation of work; these matters loomed larger than the question of wages. In early 1911 there began a long and bitter struggle with the Board about the rostering of workers; some tramwaymen left the service in disgust.²⁴⁶ At the same time, the merit-demerit system was more rigorously enforced than ever before. In a series of midnight meetings (a time chosen to enable everyone to attend) the union drew up alternative rosters giving everyone 54 hours per week and sharing shifts evenly. These were rejected by the Board.²⁴⁷ Frustration was growing, and in September 1911 the Board was presented with an ultimatum: abolish the merit-demerit system within a week or face a mass resignation.²⁴⁸ However, the deadline came and went without a walkout; the union seemed to be more concerned with telling the local Red Feds to keep their opinions to themselves. It was decided to try and get a national award from the Arbitration Court which would include more satisfactory rostering as well as wage rises.²⁴⁹ The award, when concluded, gave some increase in wages but little else. Shifts were cut to eight hours per day over twelve, from ten hours over seventeen. Preference and compulsory unionism were maintained; the union was forbidden to have members who were not employees of the Board. Job-control was generally in the Board's hands; maximum times for each operation were set and the Board was the sole judge of whether a

246. LT 24 Jan 1911, 9.

247. LT 23 Feb 1911, 7; 21 Mar 1911, 8; 8 May 1911, 8; 2 June 1911, 7; 18 Jul 1911, 3.

248. LT 4 Sept 1911, 8.

249. LT 16 Sept 1911, 11.

worker should be disgraced for unsatisfactory conduct.²⁵⁰ The surplus-deficit matter was not resolved.

The tramway workers were not happy with the settlement; two meetings were held and it was decided to approach the Board for an increase in wages above the award. A protest was also entered at the ninth hour per day required before overtime was payable.²⁵¹ The Board ignored both these approaches and the award's provisions on hours; in June 1912 the workers unanimously resolved to give the Board one week to draw up a roster giving eight hours per day spread over not more than twelve hours, or face a stopwork meeting. (Stopwork meetings were only just making their appearance in Christchurch; the watersiders at Lyttelton had held one to hear details of their new agreement early in 1912. Employers saw them as no different from strikes). As well as generally bad rosters, the union was particularly concerned about the 20 men on the 'spare list'; these were on-call and were guaranteed neither a full day's work nor sufficient sleep. The Board threatened to sack anyone who took part in a stopwork.²⁵² The union then voted to defer the stopwork until after the Board elections; the opinion was also expressed that the union should work by deputation to the Board rather than through slanging matches in the newspapers.²⁵³ The union's strategy of fighting through the elections for the Tramway Board was not successful; none of the labour candidates were elected. In part, this was because the parliamentary franchise did not

250. BoA XII, 1911, 912; LT 5 Jan 1912, 8.

251. LT 6 Jan 1912, 10.

252. LT 13 June 1912, 7; 18 June 1912, 7, 8.

253. LT 19 June 1912, 9-10; 20 June 1912; 8.

apply; voting depended on a property qualification. Having been defeated in this way, the union was forced to agree to a conference with the Board. Four months later no resolution was in sight.²⁵⁴.

The tramway workers had once again been beaten back by the persistence of their employers. All their struggles in these years had ended like that; the Board had used delaying tactics and the union, wedded to polite negotiation, had been unable to resist oppressive work-discipline or win better hours. Even when the Arbitration Court made an award in these matters or others, the Board ignored it. With hindsight, a more militant stance by the union could have worked better: the experience of the Auckland and Wellington tramway unions suggests this. Auckland struck twice in these years, and Wellington once, in February 1911 over obnoxious inspectors, and each time the workers won. We can only guess at why the Christchurch tramway workers were not as militant; possibly there were fewer immigrants and more older, settled workers among their ranks.²⁵⁵. Whatever the explanation, Christchurch tramway workers were unable to react effectively to the employers' offensive as it affected them. Although a municipal body, the Tramway Board collaborated with private-sector employers in asserting strict control over work and attacking wages.²⁵⁶.

254. LT 28 June 1912, 4; 29 June 1912, 2; 3 Jul 1912, 10.

255. Libby Plumridge suggests this as a general explanation for the more 'moderate' attitude of the Christchurch labour movement before 1914 (1979, 27).

256. For instance, more than one Tramway Board used the services of William Pryor, of the Employers' Federation, as an advocate.

V. Conclusion

By 1912 most workers in Christchurch had experienced years of difficulty in wages, in finding secure employment, and in shop-floor struggles over control and the introduction of new work processes. Wages had never been high, but around the turn of the century skilled workers had had the guarantee of at least basic comforts. The cost of providing even these comforts rose much faster than wages after 1905. For unskilled workers the situation was worse; they had to wage long campaigns to bring their wages up to even a shilling an hour. The Arbitration Court became less and less responsive to workers' claims; although almost all unions in Christchurch remained under its jurisdiction, skilled and unskilled came to share a sense of grievance at the operation of the Court and the very economic system of which it was a part.

Unskilled workers had long been accustomed to moving seasonally from job to job, but when trade was slack they were the first to feel the effects. What was unusual after 1908 was that unemployment and drifting from job to job was increasingly the lot of skilled workers as well. Many of these had their first dose of unemployment in a decade or more. Along with the falling value of wages, the scarcity of secure employment stimulated unity and militancy in the working class.

The employers' offensive was most obvious in the battle for control of the shopfloor. As well as orchestrating a campaign in the Arbitration Court to gain favourable verdicts on wage rates, employers worked to break down such independence and control as

workers had on the job. Thus in many factories and industries piece-rates and new technologies were imposed to extract greater profit for a small rise in wages; the pace of work was speeded up; less skilled workers were used; and wage rates were driven down. Discipline was maintained by fines and victimisation, and employers ignored preference agreements and campaigned for their abolition.

Employers were not uniformly successful, some groups of workers managed to keep a fair degree of control for themselves. These were the highly-skilled, such as carpenters or stonemasons; or else those who were essential to the export economy, such as shearers or slaughtermen. Workers in these essential industries were also more successful at winning wage-rises through direct action, at least until 1912.

Falling wages, rising unemployment, and a worse position in the workplace combined over the years 1905 to 1912 to stimulate a more assertive and united working class. This process was uneven; working-class political and industrial organisations had to undergo much bitter division and a profound transformation as they developed strategies to respond to the employers' campaign against living-standards and workers' control over the shop floor.

CHAPTER THREELABOUR ORGANISATIONS 1905-1912

The employers' offensive between 1905 and 1912, their drive to increase profitability by cutting real wages, creating less secure employment, introducing new labour processes, and undermining workers' control in the workplace, provoked many changes in the attitudes and structures of labour organisations. Unfortunately for the labour movement these changes did not result in greater unity or co-ordination. This had to wait until after the bitter defeats of 1912.

In 1905 the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council was one of the largest and strongest in the country. After a major organising effort in the late 1890s, most unions in Canterbury had affiliated to the Council. Of the city's larger unions, only the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants stood outside the Council, and that was the price of the Society's continuing sweet relationship with the Government. Within the Trades Council there was strong support for the Liberal Party and the Government of Richard John Seddon; this was tied up with the unions' feeling that the arbitration system protected their interests.

For some years before 1905 the socialist minority within the Council had been trying to bring the Council to endorse independent labour politics. By 1905 the Trades Council was almost

evenly divided between socialists and Liberals. Both factions, however, agreed on strong support for the arbitration system.

Although the socialists became highly critical of the administration of arbitration from 1905 onwards, few Christchurch unions rejected the system entirely.

In 1904 the national conference of Trades Councils resolved to establish an independent labour party, the Political Labour League. This body at first emphasised a policy of pushing the Seddon Government to grant further reforms, and often expressed only muted criticism of the Government. The Canterbury Trades Council organised the Christchurch branch of the League in February 1905, but this was strongly opposed by the Council's Liberals, who tried throughout the year to limit the Council's commitment to independent labour politics. The Liberal unionists were helped considerably by Seddon's long and skilful cultivation of his image as a friend of organised labour.

Influenced by the great prestige of the Prime Minister and by the even split within the Trades Council, the socialists were unable to bring the Council into open opposition to the Liberal Government. The Council thus tended to confine its political work in 1905 to seeking long lists of reforms. In its proposals for the 1905 national conference, the CTLC advocated discussion of the branding of New Zealand made goods; an elective executive; civil servants' political rights; free school textbooks; reform in mental health procedures; parliamentary franchise for all elected bodies; and an increased land tax.¹ This list of reforms could well have been adopted by the New Liberals, an anti-Seddon group

1. TLC Mar 1905.

that grew out of the Liberal Party; and had the Liberal faction been stronger in the Council, a formal alliance with the New Liberals could have been made. As it was, at one Council meeting it was resolved 'to proceed to the next business' when John Barr's Stonemasons Union recorded its regret that the CTLC had supported the formation of the Political Labour League.² But a motion by Henry Rusbridge, of the Carpenters' Union, to withdraw support from the PLL and support no one in the election was only defeated on the casting vote of the chair.³ The links with the local Liberal MHRs were still close: in June 1905 Messrs Laurenson, Ell, Tanner, and Davey addressed a special meeting of the Council and endorsed its Fighting Platform on all issues except an increased land tax. This Platform included the proposals taken to the TLC's annual conference, and proposals for the state to have sole right of vote issue; no further sale of crown lands; compulsory preference; the reform of workers' compensation for accidents; the restriction of immigration on contract; equal pay for men and women; and a faster hearing of cases by the Arbitration Court.⁴ Socialists and the Liberals were also in agreement on Chinese immigration; the socialists, Jimmy Thorn and Jack McCullough led the Council to call for a prohibitive poll tax on Chinese as a 'menace to the mental, moral, physical, and social welfare of our people'.⁵ Equality had its limits.

The balance of power between the factions in the CTLC was

2. TLC 25 Feb 1905.
3. TLC 17 June 1905.
4. TLC 21 June 1905.
5. TLC 4 Feb 1905.

even throughout 1905. As well as the near-reversal of the Council's commitment to the PLL, the Liberal faction saw its standard-bearer John Barr elected to the Council presidency in July.⁶ Barr's highly respectable brand of unionism was often apparent; the CTLC stated its support for the celebrations of the centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar in a communication to the Navy League. The Council also refused to enter a protest at the increased naval subsidy sent by this country to Britain.⁷ It refused to be represented at the opening of Thorn's PLL campaign in Christchurch South - the most aggressive of the PLL campaigns - yet during the course of the campaign the Council registered strong disapproval at Barr's action in officially signing a Liberal pamphlet. The invitation to attend Thorn's opening was declined on the grounds that policy had already been made to endorse no party or candidate - such a policy had not been made, but Henry Rusbridge, the mover of the refusal, was not challenged on this point. Consistency was often a victim of the faction-fighting.⁸

The CTLC had long had a policy of collaboration with the Liberal Party, but any inclination that the local MHRs actually had towards more far-reaching reform was not supported by the bulk of the Liberal parliamentarians. Although Seddon declared himself personally in favour of preference to unionists when he received a deputation from the TLC's conference in May 1905,⁹ he was not about to antagonise the country Liberals by making

6. TLC 1 July 1905.

7. TLC 7 Oct, 12 Aug 1905.

8. TLC 7 Oct, 2 Dec 1905.

9. LT 2 May 1905, 4.

effective moves in this direction. Preference was to be left to the Arbitration Court to rule on; Seddon could avoid the blame for its decisions. Similarly, Seddon refused to consider actually doing anything to give greater protection to local industry. This issue especially affected the agricultural machinery, boot, and clothing trades. Throughout 1905 there had been much concern among both metal trades employers and unionists at the highly organised penetration of the local agricultural implements market by the American International Harvester Company, which had a near-monopoly in the United States. Unions called for high tariffs to protect local manufacturers, and the Canterbury Industrial Association endorsed this call. Most Farmers' Unions, however, opposed protection since IHC was selling machinery cheaper than New Zealand firms.¹⁰ Despite the systematic collection and presentation of evidence, Seddon told a deputation of Christchurch and Dunedin union leaders, accompanied by 47 MPs, that 'a great deal more information was required'.¹¹ With an election approaching, Seddon refused to commit himself, and he remained mindful of the Farmers' Union's wishes and influence. In 1906 the CTLC presented to the national conference a list of remits that was almost identical to that of 1905.¹² Considering that most of the proposals were a relatively simple matter of legislation, and did not extend to calling for a change in the ownership of land or capital, the Trades Councils had little real influence with the Government.

The CTLC's concern about the state of industry in New

10. LT 4 Oct 1905, 5. Palmerston North was an exception, LT 16 Nov 1905, 7.

11. LT 14 Oct 1905, 3.

12. TLC 6 Jan 1906.

Zealand was not confined to the agricultural machinery trade. In June 1905 the Council resolved to set up a joint committee with the Canterbury Industrial Association, an employers' organisation, to investigate ways of strengthening local industries against foreign competitors. Representatives of unions in the boot, clothing, metal, and furniture trades attended a meeting with the CIA¹³. and the resulting committee spent eight months interviewing local manufacturers. When it reported, the committee recommended greater protection, compulsory branding, and an advertising campaign to encourage consumers to 'buy New Zealand'.¹⁴ The CTLC called a public meeting after the report was completed; W. W. Tanner and Harry Ell were on the platform along with the president of the Industrial Association. Speakers at this meeting called for a legislated maximum profit to allow higher wages, worker shareholding, and the restructuring of production into bigger enterprises.¹⁵ There was, then, a tendency on the part of some unionists to identify with employers' interests, and to adopt the gospel of 'bigger is better'.

Yet unionists and the CTLC often opposed employers' campaigns for the rationalisation of production. At Employers' Federation conferences, there were customary fulminations against overtime wages, preference, and controls on the numbers of apprentices and under-rate workers.¹⁶ Such arguments, especially over preference, were not new; preference had been a major issue in 1890, and in 1901 the CTLC had had a public slanging match with

13. TLC 3 June 1905; LT 1 July 1905, 3.

14. LT 24 Mar 1906, 7.

15. LT 7 Apr 1906, 9.

16. LT 7 Sept 1905, 8.

the Canterbury Employers' Association on the same question.¹⁷. The CEA strongly criticised the CTLC's remits for the 1905 Trades Councils' Conference; stating in a letter to the Farmers' Union that some of them 'specifically attacked the agricultural and pastoral interests'.¹⁸. The Employers' Association was keen to strengthen links between urban and rural employers; the North Canterbury Farmers' Union and the Sheepowners' Union joined the Association by the end of 1906.¹⁹.

By 1906 employers were beginning to see advantages in the arbitration system, despite their fulminations against it. In September 1905 the New Zealand Employers' Federation conference 'praised the operation of the system; the predictability of that system, and the way in which battles could be transferred from the workplace to the courtroom, were assets for employers'.²⁰. It was on the same grounds that the militant Red Federation of Labour would criticise arbitration after 1908.

Employers' organisations gave considerable time to discussing the rationalisation of production along the lines of American 'scientific management' ideology. This ideology stressed piece-work and other productivity - indexed systems of payment, time and motion division of tasks, and the elimination of any union controls in the workplace. George Booth, the owner of a large agricultural machinery factory, told the Canterbury Employers' Association that New Zealand production methods could be 'Americanised' since the workers did not appear to have quite adopted

18. LT 18 May 1905, 4.

19. LT 17 Dec 1906, 2.

20. LT 9 Sept 1905, 10.

the British trade union attitude that there was only a finite amount of work to go round. While British unionism was thoroughly bad and utterly destructive, 'There was a great deal of ambition in the New Zealand workmen, and they were amenable to suggestions to turn out more work...for their employers and earn more wages for themselves'.²¹ Booth misjudged the views of the workers; he expressed similar views a year later and got a very terse response from metal trades unions. The Moulders' Union stated that productivity payments led to workers shortening their lives through overwork and called such payments 'A form of slavery which we as Britishers strongly protest against'. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers was not impressed either; 'it believed that productivity payments were 'the forerunner of absolute sweating, the direct means of robbing the worker of that share of the production of his labour that he has a right to expect', and that such payments lowered the standard of work and divided workers against each other.²² The Trades Council expressed similar views; in a long manifesto it stated that the large output of American industries depended on 'specialising, coupled with a total disregard of life or limb...the American workman does not stand in the same field with the New Zealand workman as a tradesman. He is only a machine, a specialist...of little use away from one particular item of production'. Despite Booth's appreciative remarks, employers had a well-founded distrust of the workers' unions. The Employers' Federation's Parliamentary Secretary, William Pryor, advocated that union membership should be limited to the 'efficient'. This would

21. LT 30 Jan 1906, 2.

22. LT 30 Apr 1907, 2; 7 May 1907, 6; 14 May 1907, 3.

allow employers to control unions as there would be 'a community of interest' between employers and workers. The question of preference would disappear since 'non-Unionists, as inferiors, would have no claim to consideration'.²³ The Trades Councils' national executive and John Barr both made vigorous statements in defence of preference as a logical part of industrial arbitration. According to Barr, who had a labour column in the Lyttelton Times, in preference 'we are fighting for the industrial peace of the country'.²⁴ The Trades Councils' executive pointed out that 90% of breach of award cases heard by the Arbitration Court were brought against employers or non-union workers.²⁵

The 1906 conference of Trades and Labour Councils was more willing to challenge the Liberal Government on industrial matters than any previous conference had been; perhaps the similarity of the order-paper to those of previous years caused a mood of frustration among delegates. The executive reported its regret that, in the year since the last conference, the Government had done nothing about the encroachment of foreign trusts and combines, the increasing debt of the country, or the continuing sale of Crown land. Some small reforms had been conceded; the conference approved of the Workers' Dwellings Act, the amendment of the Mines Act to count work bank-to-bank, the increase in pensions, and the provision of a minimum wage for women over 20. The Arbitration Court, however, was criticised even more than the Government. The executive report noted that awards of the Court were actually reducing workers' standard of

23. LT 27 Jul 1906, 3.

24. LT 11 Aug 1906, 12.

25. LT 14 July 1906, 7.

*interesting
dialectic between
rural & town
perspectives*

living. David McLaren, the secretary of the Wellington Water-side Workers' Union, led the conference to declare that it had 'no confidence in the Arbitration Court as at present constituted'. By this was specifically meant the President of the Court, Mr. Justice Chapman; it was stated that the employers' and workers' representatives could be expected to take predictable positions on most cases, with the Judge's opinion being crucial. It was felt that Chapman made a practice of ignoring the evidence presented to the Court.²⁶ A case in point was that of the Wellington Engine-Drivers Union which lost a dispute despite presenting 29 witnesses.²⁷ It was not surprising that employers were coming to accept the arbitration system as working in their interests; and a Parliament full of country-oriented Liberals would not be likely to consider changes in the direction of the Trades Councils' wishes.

The workload of the Arbitration Court was growing too; in its 1906 visit - like Christmas, the Court came once a year - to Christchurch, the Court faced 'the most formidable list that had been compiled for years'. In one month it heard 54 breach of award cases, 12 compensation for injury cases, 5 other cases, and 11 award hearings.²⁸ Whatever the shortcomings of the system, Christchurch unions made full use of it. Employers had become highly organised; the CEA had 23 member unions totalling 1050 people. The Sheepowners were the largest with 307 members; the Builders and Contractors had 140 and the Licenced Victuallers

26. LT 16 Apr 1906, 5, 10; 20 Apr 1906, 2.

27. LT 12 May 1906, 5.

28. LT 30 Aug 1906, 6.

107.²⁹ Increasing employer organisation was perhaps one reason why trade unions were becoming disenchanted with the Arbitration Court; at one of its quarterly meetings the CEA was told that 'in a country where important labour laws were in operation... unity of action on any great question was of the utmost importance'. Indeed, the Association's delegate to the national conference said that the 'Employers' position was better now than it had ever been, but they would have to be careful not to slacken their efforts in any degree, and they must never rest until all employers were thoroughly aroused to a sense of their duty.³⁰ Under Sir Joseph Ward, the Liberal Government was openly becoming an employers' government, while maintaining professions of friendship to the workers.

The conciliation and arbitration system remained the major focus of the CTLC's growing disillusionment with Liberalism. This was not surprising - most of the affiliated unions owed their strength, some even their very existence, to the IC&A Act. The Act itself had its first really serious challenge in February 1907, when slaughtermen all round the country went out on strike over pay and conditions.

The Liberal faction in the CTLC feared for the future of the arbitration system, feared being exposed to the undiluted power of the employers if that system should fail. Perhaps too, they feared for the loss of a carefully cultivated respectable image. John Barr, for instance, wrote in his Lyttelton Times

29. LT 27 Aug 1906, 3.

30. LT 17 Dec 1906, 2.

column that the strike was 'to be regretted', that it would be exploited by the enemies of arbitration. Barr accused the striking workers of being transients (that is, Australians), 'not concerned about the industrial peace of the colony'. Subsequently it was shown that very few of the strikers were Australians, but Barr contrasted the strike with the usual 'patience and forbearance' of New Zealand workers for whom the Arbitration Court, not striking, was the last resort.³¹ The CTLC proved unwilling to commit itself; a motion of sympathy with the slaughtermen 'in their attempts to gain a fairer share of the results of their labour' moved by Fred Cooke of the Tailors' Union was not proceeded with after Barr proposed an amendment.³² Some unions, however, expressed their support; the Furniture Trades Union was one which passed a motion of sympathy; the General Labourers did likewise.³³ The national secretary of the Employers' Federation, William Pryor, stated that the strike proved there was no advantage to employers in granting preference to union members; unionists had gone on strike with all the rest. He advocated the amendment of the Arbitration Act to provide for the jailing of strikers.³⁴

The Slaughtermens' Union officials, who had opposed the strike, consistently took the view that the strike showed the urgent need to reform the arbitration system. The Trades Councils' conference believed that 'the Act is no preventive against the continuous accumulation of wealth in a few hands,

31. LT 23 Feb 1907, 13.

32. TLC 8 Mar 1907.

33. FT 13 Mar 1907; LT 16 Mar 1907, 5.

34. LT 7 Mar 1907, 2; 7 Aug 1907, 3.

which is the cause of the economic evils that are crushing the workers in our colony the same as in other lands. The Arbitration Act is not even a partial solution'. The Lyttelton Times, commenting on this, called for compulsory preference as essential to making the system work.³⁵ The CEA regarded compulsory preference with distaste, and G. T. Booth told the Association that trade unions' pressure had transformed the Arbitration Court into 'a convenient substitute for strikes'. With curious logic, he then said that for this reason the system had broken down and produced the slaughtermen's strike.³⁶ The Lyttelton Times did the rounds of local unions, asking for their opinions on IC&A. Almost without exception, the replies praised the advantages of the system; wages had risen, legal recognition was given, unions could exert some job control in numbers of apprentices and under-rate workers. Many union officials complained, however, that the rising cost of living nullified wage increases.³⁷ One dissident carpenter, however, called attention to the minimal rise in real wages since 1898 and claimed that workers would be better to enforce their demands themselves, as they had done in the past.³⁸ In his speech to the CEA, Booth had also called for the introduction of a bonus-payment system on the ground that an enforced minimum wage downgraded productivity to the level of the lowest. The Moulders' Union and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers reacted vigorously. The Moulders called bonus systems a 'form of slavery' and for good measure

35. LT 8 Apr 1907, 3, 6.

36. LT 24 Apr 1907, 2, 9.

37. LT 27 Apr 1907, 4; 4 May 1907, 13; 11 May 1907, 2; 25 May 1907, 7; 1 June 1907, 6; 8 June 1907, 6; 15 June 1907, 12; 22 June 1907, 12; 29 June 1907, 12; 6 July 1907, 4.

38. LT 3 May 1907, 4.

pointed out that advantages to workers necessarily came at the employers' expense as 'the interests of capitalist and worker are diametrically opposed'. The ASE said that any productivity - related payment system lowered the standard of work produced, set workers against each other, and was a 'direct means of robbing the worker'. The CTLC expressed the same views in rather more restrained and lengthy fashion.³⁹

The changes in the relationship between Trades Hall and employer organisations was indicated by the fact that the Industrial Association no longer invited the CTLC along for discussions on tariffs; many of the CIA's members were also prominent in the CEA.⁴⁰ It was also indicated by a resolution adopted by the Trades Councils' national conference on the motion of Jimmy Thorn, stating that 'all financial benefits accruing from the labour legislation of the past had been nullified by the action of the capitalist class in increasing prices out of proportion to the increase in wages'. The conference called for 'a system of producing the necessities of life and of supplying them to the people at cost price'.⁴¹ The conference also expressed its intention that the workers' representative on the Arbitration Court be a more vigorous defender of the workers' interests: it voted to replace the incumbent, Robert Slater, by Jack McCullough.⁴²

The Government introduced major amendments to the IC&A Act in 1907. John Andrew Millar, the Minister of Labour, had

39. LT 30 Apr 1907, 2; 7 May 1907, 6; 14 May 1907, 3.

40. LT 27 Jul 1907, 12.

41. LT 6 Apr 1907, 11.

42. LT 25 Apr 1907, 5.

at first been greeted by union leaders as an inspired choice for the post. The 1907 amendments, however, did his reputation as a trade unionist no good whatsoever. The amending bill was a complex one. It proposed to define every employee as a worker, to give power to Magistrates' Courts to hear enforcement cases, and to enable the Arbitration Court to order non-unionists to make payments to unions.⁴³ The first two proposals were generally acceptable to unions, but the third was regarded as a totally inadequate substitute for preference. Other proposals drew a great deal of union ire. The abolition of the Conciliation Boards and their replacement by Industrial Councils, with three assessors each way, was not welcomed; a risk of victimisation was seen. Proposals to make union members individually liable for fines levied on the union as a body, and to allow for fines to be compulsorily deducted from wages reduced the worker to serfdom, in the view of the Trades Council. Clauses that took jurisdiction over under-rate workers' permits from unions and gave it to Inspectors of Awards, and which forbade any person over 21 to hold an apprenticeship, were not welcomed either, the latter as it would reduce the general level of secondary education. Most reprehensible of all to the unions was a clause which forbade anyone not connected with the trade from holding office in a union.⁴⁴ This clause could have destroyed unions prone to victimisation, such as the Farm Labourers and the Tailoresses. The CTLC called the amendments an 'employers' bill'. The Federated Bootmakers' Union and the General Labourers' Union were among those which recorded strong protests.⁴⁵ Jack McCullough

43. LT 30 Aug 1907, 9.

44. LT 9 Sept 1907, 9.

45. LT 11 Sept 1907, 7; 12 Sept 1907, 9.

warned Millar that if he persisted 'his name would be execrated as much as the name of the Hon. W. P. Reeves, the founder of the Act, was revered and respected', and said that Millar had departed from 'a right state of mind as a unionist'.⁴⁶ John Barr, in the Legislative Council by now, was (almost) the sole defender of the bill in the Trades Council; in his newspaper column he criticised the CTLC manifesto as being hasty and strident, and even gave his support to the clause restricting union office.⁴⁷ This drew a strong rebuke from McCullough, who said that Barr, 'for two weeks, has done nothing but find fault with the unionists' and condemned Barr for publicly attacking a CTLC decision. The Lyttelton Times weighed in with an accusation that the PLL was dictating to the Trades Council.⁴⁸ Only the Carpenters and Joiners' Union (Henry Rusbridge's organisation) gave Barr any support, and that only partial.⁴⁹ Perhaps sensing the Government's lack of sympathy for unionism, the Farmers' Union began to petition for the exclusion of farm labourers from the coverage of the Act.⁵⁰ The Trades Council campaign culminated in a very large public meeting held in Cathedral Square one Sunday in October.⁵¹ Two months later, Millar announced that the passage of the bill would be postponed in order to allow fuller consideration.⁵² The Trades Council's socialist faction had won a victory of sorts in gaining this delay, but within the Council this involved a great deal of effort and sometimes stormy debates.⁵³ The struggle between the

46. LT 10 Sept 1907, 8.

47. LT 14 Sept 1907, 4.

48. LT 13 Sept 1907, 4, 6, 8.

49. LT 24 Sept 1907, 8.

50. LT 23 Sept 1907, 8.

51. LT 14 Oct 1907, 3.

52. LT 9 Dec 1907, 5.

53. TLC 16 Nov 1907.

socialists and the Liberals was by no means concluded, and it would rage on. Both sides accepted the conciliation and arbitration system; they were split on the question of whether to accept that system as final or to critically use it as the best system going. The struggle was fundamentally over whether to accept capitalism and Liberal concepts of the arbitration system, or whether to aim for a socialist government which would use arbitration much more decisively to the workers' advantage.

The idea of totally rejecting the arbitration system was never held by a major faction within the CTLC. Although in the years after 1908 some important Christchurch unions - notably the Stevedores and the General Labourers - favoured direct negotiation with employers, Christchurch unions were generally prepared to use the arbitration system as best they could, even if highly critical of its operation. Criticism of the IC&A Act and its administration, and of the Liberal Government, increased markedly in the eighteen months following the Blackball strike. This disaffection culminated in July 1909, when the independent Labour faction took complete control of the CTLC Executive.

Even if prepared to use the arbitration system themselves, Christchurch unions generally supported the strike at Blackball. The issues - length of the dinner-break and victimisation of unionists - were clear. Although John Barr was of the view that the strike was regrettable, and gave to employers an excuse to walk out of the arbitration system, he was in a distinct minority.⁵⁴

54. LT 7 Mar 1908, 12.

The CTLC passed a motion offering financial help if necessary, but in a long and heated discussion decided not to endorse a Socialist Party call for nationalisation of the Blackball mine. The suggestion was held over for the executive to report.⁵⁵

Individual unions were more forthcoming. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers heartily approved of the strike and offered wishes for every success; the Drivers' Union unanimously voted £10-10s; the Furniture Trades Union sent sympathy and £5; the Tailloresses and Pressers voted £2 2s although recording its regret at the action of striking; the Iron and Brass Moulders sent £5; the Boilermakers had a lengthy discussion and decided on £2 2s; the Tailors recognised 'that the Miners fight is our fight and that 'by helping them we are helping ourselves' and gave £5. The Tramway Workers, only established in 1906, sent £2 2s; the Freezers' Union, which had not mentioned the slaughtermen's strike a year earlier, collected £7 12s from its members; the Operative Plasters voted £5.⁵⁶ The support came from unions in all types of industry and of all sizes - and of different degrees of 'respectability'. The Boilermakers, for instance, took their role as a mutual-aid society and protector of craft standards very seriously, yet stood alongside Drivers and Tramway Workers. Some unions, of course, refused to give any support; the Canterbury Carpenters and Joiners said that the strike was 'calculated to bring into disrepute one of the best labour laws that has ever been passed'. The Stonemasons refused to assist, and the Aerated Water Workers were unanimously and emphatically of like mind.⁵⁷ The PLL and the Socialist Party also assisted; both

55. TLC 7 Mar 1908, 18 Apr 1908.

56. LT 10 Mar 1908, 7; 1 Apr 1908, 7; 9 Apr 1908, 9; IBM 27 Mar 1908; BM 7 Apr 1908, TT 25 Mar 1908; TU 29 Mar 1908; FU 25 Apr 1908; OP 1 Apr 1908.

57. LT 19 Mar 1908, 7; TLC 9 May 1908; LT 20 Mar 1908, 8.

parties collected money at factory gates, and raised substantial sums. Protest meetings called by these bodies were packed out.⁵⁸ The Canterbury Employers' Association, perhaps shocked at how much solidarity was being shown, called on the Government to prosecute all unions 'aiding and abetting' the strike.⁵⁹ The Lyttelton Times lectured unionists on the virtues of upholding the law, but news of the miners' victory was received with jubilation by the Trades Council. The Times predicted that as a result of the Blackball strike and that by the slaughtermen a year previously, the Government would move to increase penalties against strikers.⁶⁰

The miners at Blackball had taken direct action because they felt an arbitration hearing would be delayed for too long, and because, like many workers, they had ceased to have any confidence that the IC&A system would give justice or protect their interests. The attitude of both the employers organisations and the government hardened in response. The Canterbury Employers' Association called for a law against giving any money to strikers, and the (pro-Government) Lyttelton Times regarded this attitude as 'very moderate and very reasonable'.⁶¹ Both Millar and Ward threatened to repeal the whole IC&A Act if there were any more strikes,⁶² clearly a threat directed at those unions which had supported the Blackball miners while themselves remaining in the arbitration system. Some unions tended to support the Government; the Otago TLC, which had given no support to the

58. LT 13 Apr 1908, 3.

59. LT 29 Apr 1908, 8.

60. LT 19 Mar 1908, 7; 5 May 1908, 6; 13 May 1908, 7; TLC 16 May 1908.

61. LT 28 May 1908, 3.

62. LT 1 July 1908, 10.

Blackball strike, expressed its alarm at the tendency to strike against the arbitration system.⁶³ The Otago TLC was the power-base of John Thomas Paul, who had been instrumental in founding the PLL but had become much closer to the Liberal Government since his appointment as a Legislative Councillor in 1907.

The Government's response came in Millar's revised proposals for the amendment of the IC&A Act, released in July 1908. These could hardly have been intended to conciliate angry unions. The new Amendment Bill provided for increased fines for strikes: £200 for unions, and £10 and £1 per week for individuals. Fines of £20 and £50 for continuing were provided for lockouts. The fines for striking included aiding and abetting a strike. In transport, food, and energy industries, 21 days notice had to be given of an (illegal) strike or three months' jail could be inflicted on workers. Striking unions could be deregistered. The proposed Industrial Councils were replaced by Councils of Conciliation, consisting of one assessor from each side, chaired by a Magistrate. The other proposals from 1907 remained.⁶⁴

Christchurch unions were nearly unanimous in their protests. Even John Barr and Henry Rusbridge criticised the proposals; Rusbridge felt the penalties were severe, and Barr said they were 'something more than repugnant'. He also condemned the legalising of piecework payments across the board as an attack on wages.⁶⁵ The national conference of Trades Councils, after a good deal of arguing, carried a motion calling for a return to the 'principles

63. LT 3 Jul 1908, 8.

64. LT 9 Jul 1908, 9.

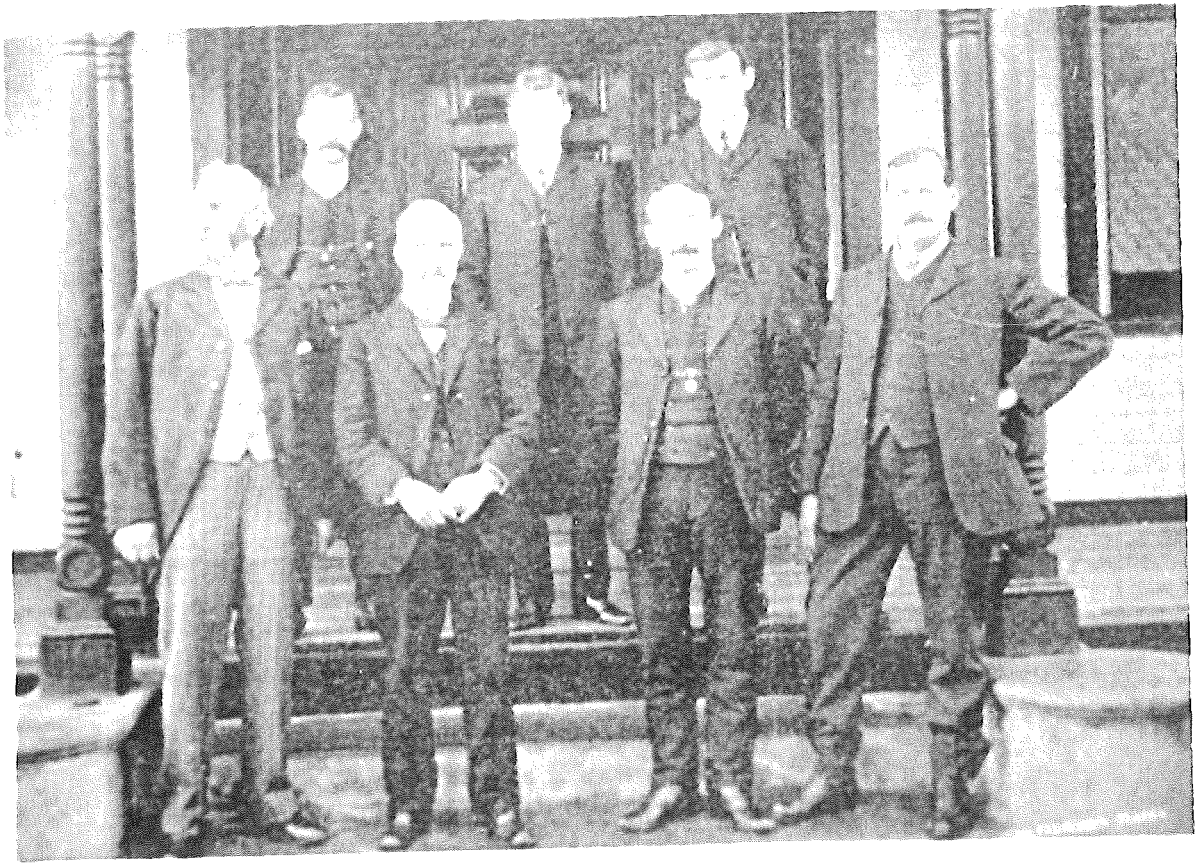
65. LT 10 Jul 1908, 8; 18 Jul 1908

General Labourers' Dispute 1909; delegates to the Conciliation Council. Ted Howard back left, L.R. Wilson back right; J. Bradshaw back centre. Wilson was especially active in organising the city's unemployed workers.

- Canterbury Times 19 May 1909, 41.

Immigration: a contingent of youths recruited in Britain by the Labour Department for farm-work in New Zealand. Farmers were keen to have these youths, as they demanded less in wages and conditions than older, more settled workers.

- Canterbury Times 1 Feb 1911, 39.



of 1894'. James Thorn told the conference that 'practically all the unions in Canterbury were unanimous in their opposition to the new Bill. They would not have their disputes settled by arbitration when arbitration was always against them'.⁶⁶ The Canterbury Freezers' Union felt that the original aims of the Act, namely the abolition of sweating and the securing of a fair reward to workers for their labour, had degenerated into arbitrary wage-fixing.⁶⁷ The Furniture Trades Union, like many others, was opposed to the penalty provisions, to the numbers required to form a union (increased from 7 to 21), and to the removal from unions of control over under-rate permits.⁶⁸ The CTLC had a stormy meeting on the Bill, and expressed qualified approval of the Bill's principles, except for the penalty clauses. A detailed list of proposed changes was drawn up, including a fine of £100 for wrongful dismissal of union officials by employers. Decisions on such matters depended on which delegates turned up to the Council meetings; the Tailoring Trade Union protested in October at a small section of delegates using 'stone-walling tactics' to prevent full consideration of the amendment Bill.⁶⁹ When the Bill was eventually brought back to Parliament, a number of the most objectionable provisions were dropped, including imprisonment for strikers in essential industries and restrictions on union officeholders.⁷⁰ But the other provisions remained and the Act as a whole represented a crackdown on unionism. Unionists feared victimisation of those workers who took part in the Industrial Councils as assessors; these assessors had to be

66. LT 23 Jul 1908, 7.

67. LT 27 Jul 1908, 7.

68. LT 30 Jul 1908, 9.

69. TLC 1 Aug 1908, 22 Aug 1908, 3 Oct 1908.

70. LT 17 Oct 1908, 6; TLC 16 Oct 1909.

employed in the relevant trade. One 'Unionist' knew of union representatives who, even under the old system, had

been discharged from their employment shortly after a conference, without any reason being given, and who from that time have been unable to get work at their trade....How the Minister of Labour, who was at one time a unionist and took the leading part in the largest strike we ever had in New Zealand, could frame (the Act) and say it is not against the interests of unionism, is a mystery to all true unionists.⁷¹

The Canterbury Employers' Association was pleased with the IC and A Amendment Bill; the president, F. W. Hobbs, stated that it was the 'last try' for compulsory arbitration, which he claimed was under threat from 'revolutionary socialism'.⁷² But the Employers' Association had found little to complain about in recent judgements from the Arbitration Court. In August 1908 the Court made its decision on the Farm Labourers' claim for an award. To the surprise and outrage of the Farm Labourers' Union and every other union, the Court refused to make an award on the ground that the farming industry was too important to upset.⁷³ The workers' union had spent over £600, the hearings had lasted 95 working days all over Canterbury, numerous witnesses had given accounts of long hours, low pay, bad food, and worse accommodation,⁷⁴ and yet the Court held that there had been shown no necessity for an award. Every case that the Union showed as evidence was regarded as 'isolated'; and, according to Mr. Justice Sim, the President of the Court,

the dissatisfaction now proved to exist does not appear to amount to more than this, that a large number of workers would like to have their wages increased.

71. LT 1 Jul 1908, 5.

72. LT 30 Jul 1908, 9.

73. LT 22 Aug 1908, 9.

74. LT 20 May 1908, 3, 6; 2 May 1908, 6.

That is, doubtless, a perfectly natural and laudable desire on their part, but the existence of such a desire is not of itself a sufficient ground for the interference of the Court.⁷⁵

The unions could only interpret the decision as a refusal to offend the Farmers' Union. That the Court should refuse an award because 'of the magnitude of the interests involved' was an admission either of rank cowardice or of gross partisanship. Jack McCullough, the Workers' Representative on the Court, strongly dissented and issued an unofficial minority report:

It is quite probable that the Court would not have succeeded in giving general satisfaction in all directions, yet I am convinced that it was quite within its power, and therefore within its duty, to have drafted or arranged an award...it appears to me to be a most extraordinary and despotic proceeding to say that the largest sector of workers in this dominion should be denied the right to have the condition of their livelihood, their wages and hours of labour, fixed by means of that legislation which has been expressly provided for this very purpose.⁷⁶

With restrained jubilation, Henry Broadhead of the CEA called the judgement 'a very lucid exposition of the matter. It would please the farmers'.⁷⁷ Jimmy Thorn, who had been one of the FLU's advocates, 'could hardly express his disgust with the finding'; he protested that Sim having the right to decide not to give an award meant that he could 'absolutely nullify not only the promises of the Government, but the definite enactments of the Parliament of the country'. As far as the supposed 'difficulty of enforcement' was concerned, that could 'safely be left to the Union'.⁷⁸

75. LT 22 Aug 1908, 9.

76. Ibid, 10.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

Jack McCullough had privately threatened to 'bust up the Court' if it denied an award. He did not do this, but in consultation with 'Miss Rout's gang' - Ettie Rout, Pat Darcy, Thorn, and Ted Kennedy, who had conducted the case for the FLU - he did orchestrate a campaign of public and union meetings to condemn the decision and call for the sacking of Sim.

McCullough rejected the idea of resignation in protest as being likely to allow the Liberal faction of unionists to take his position and regain the initiative in the fight for control of the Trades Councils and the unions' attitude to arbitration.⁷⁹

Not a single Christchurch union publicly supported Sim's continuing presidency of the Court, although some expressed no opinion on the TLC protest.⁸⁰ Most had also contributed to the FLU's expenses in the hearings.

Quite unmoved by the storm of protest, Sim continued to display his anti-union feelings. In September - just two weeks after he had brought down the Farm Labourers' decision - he announced, in the award for the South Island sawmill workers, that he intended to put a new clause in that award and all others. By this new clause, the workers' union would automatically be regarded as responsible for any strike that occurred, and the award would be suspended over the whole district to which it applied as long as any strike lasted. In the award for the Canterbury Shearers' Union brought down soon after, it was stated that such suspension of the award could continue after a strike was over, 'until the further order of this Court'. In the event

79. Nolan, 69.

80. And very few unions elsewhere did either; the Auckland Slaughtermen were one of the few; LT 4 Sept 1908, 8.

of a strike in one workplace, all employers in the same trade were relieved of any obligation to the award and could impose any conditions they pleased. This amounted to the threat of instant deregistration for any strike. The Lyttelton Times called the new clause 'an excess of zeal'.⁸¹ John Barr supported the clause, but George Laurenson, radical Liberal MP for Lyttelton, called it 'extraordinary'.⁸² The CEA, not surprisingly, endorsed the clause; the CTLC issued another protest and unions regarded it as further reason to get rid of Sim.⁸³

At the same time as the attacks were coming from employers, Court, and Government, the union movement was undergoing some changes in organisation. These were in two main areas: the tendency to create national federations of unions in the same trade, and the secession of a number of unions from the CTLC.

The reasons for drawing into national federations were fairly obvious; until 1909 the IC&A system was organised entirely on the basis of provincial Industrial Districts, and the unions of each district had to take separate cases before the Conciliation Boards and the Arbitration Court. National federations made possible a co-ordinated approach on wages and conditions. It was also necessary to counter the growing power of employer organisations, some of which existed on a national level. The miners, of course, had begun to federate with these and other objectives in mind in 1908. The general labourers' unions held their first national conference in December 1908; the slaughtermen's unions

81. LT 9 Sept 1908, 5; 10 Sept 1908, 5.

82. LT 10 Sept 1908, 8.

83. LT 11 Sept 1908, 7; 14 Sept 1908, 4.

met two months later.⁸⁴ Some months later, the furniture workers and timber workers formed their own federations.⁸⁵ The New Zealand branches of the ASCJ formed the New Zealand Federation of Carpenters and Joiners,⁸⁶ even the small Stonemasons' Unions federated.⁸⁷ With the exception of the Slaughtermen, none of these federations appear to have ever had much impact. The New Zealand Federated Boot Trade Unions had a somewhat higher profile, and in January 1909 they commenced an agitation for the abolition of the protective tariff on boots and shoes 'owing to the refusal of the New Zealand Boot Manufacturers' Association to concede a fair rate of wages and conditions of employment'. In the unions' view, 'the workers of the dominion should not be taxed to support an industry which cannot provide a decent condition of employment for the workers connected therewith'.⁸⁸ This resulted in a public row with the Manufacturers' Association.

Of more concern to the CTLC was the decision by the various Drivers' Unions to federate. The problem for the Trades Council lay in the view expressed at the Drivers' Unions' conference that the TLC system was obsolete.⁸⁹ This was followed six months later by the Canterbury Drivers' Union giving notice to withdraw from the CTLC. Since that meant the loss of 400 affiliated unionists, it was a serious blow. The Drivers' Union stated that it preferred to put its money and energy into the Federation; it also accused the Council of devoting too much

84. LT 31 Dec 1908, 8; 18 Feb 1909, 7.

85. LT 2 Nov 1909, 7; 3 Nov 1909, 4.

86. LT 11 Aug 1909, 8.

87. LT 2 Oct 1909, 6.

88. LT 14 Jan 1909, 8.

89. LT 2 Jan 1909, 7.

time to talking politics.⁹⁰ In the early part of the decade, the CTLC had been the largest Trades Council in the country; as a locally based federation of unions it had considerable potential power. National federations of individual trades looked to the interests of their members, and could sometimes be effective, but this was at the cost of united and effective action among all workers in a particular area. The shearers' unions, when they federated into the New Zealand Shearers and Other Pastoral Employees Union, also weakened the CTLC in this way, since their ideas on political action conflicted with the majority view of the CTLC, which by 1909 favoured independent labour. This conflict was over the appropriate form of political party. The Shearers favoured a unions-only party, while the CTLC, in particular Jack McCullough and Dan Sullivan, wanted a broader-based organisation allied to non-working class progressives.⁹¹

It was the question of independent labour that really split the CTLC in 1909. From the beginning of the century, there had been dispute between the supporters of the Liberal Party and the advocates of an independent Labour party. This had been especially so since the foundation of the PLL in 1904. Since that date, the two factions had been more or less evenly balanced, neither side able to claim complete or decisive victories. Decisions taken at one Council meeting could be reversed at another if the opposing faction turned out in greater strength. In 1908 the Council had supported the Labour and Socialist can-

90. LT 10 Jul 1909, 10, 11.

91. Nolan, 94-100.

didates for Parliament, and John Barr had protested that this violated Rule 2 of the Council's Constitution, 'to foster and encourage the growth of trades unionism'.⁹² The Labour faction undoubtedly believed that there wasn't much point in trying to do that if Parliament was hostile, and the Canterbury Employers' Association confirmed this feeling when it recorded its pleasure that 'the House, as now elected, was less radical in its views than any Parliament for many years past'.⁹³ There was more in dispute than tactics, however; the Labour faction were socialists who demanded the nationalisation of land, banking, and industry; the Liberal unionists believed that 'Labour is not opposed to Capital, but only to any and every attempt...to monopolise capital'.⁹⁴

During 1908, according to Mick Laracy, it had at times 'been war to the knife between those who are termed Socialists on one side and on the other those faithful followers of Sir Joseph Ward, who never lose sight of the Upper House'.⁹⁵ Trades Council meetings were often quarrelsome. On one occasion, Dan Sullivan, a Furniture Trades Union delegate and a leading socialist, questioned the action of Council delegates on a committee, and 'Mr. Barr, in replying Used words which Mr. Sullivan took exception to and just as the discussion was becoming interesting Mr. Wright ask if a quorum was present'. It wasn't.⁹⁶

Fighting between socialists and Liberals in the Council

- 92. LT 24 Oct 1908, 13.
- 93. LT 9 Dec 1908, 5.
- 94. John Barr, LT 7 Nov 1908, 12.
- 95. LT 10 Nov 1908, 2.
- 96. TLC 8 Feb 1908.

sometimes produced 'a smell of sulphur'. Jack McCullough, a long-serving socialist, regarded John Barr, the Council's most prominent Liberal, as a crawler and said as much in a letter to Tom Paul, a Dunedin labour leader active in the Political Labour League. McCullough wanted to get the Trades Councils' conference in 1907 to launch a major organising drive for the League among unions, but was reluctant to raise the matter at the Canterbury Trades Council for fear of an explosion. He asked Paul to get the Otago Council to promote this idea, but Paul was by this time getting close to the Liberals and so nothing happened. Both Paul and Barr were appointed to Parliament's Upper House, the Legislative Council, by the Government in January 1907. The Canterbury delegation to the Trades Councils' conference was composed entirely of socialists, 'a glorious victory + I hope the beginning of very many which Independent Labour will have on our Council'.⁹⁷.

Warfare continued throughout 1908 and 1909, becoming more bitter. A number of unions withdrew from the Council. Some, such as the Stevedores and the Drivers, did so to concentrate on their own Federations. The Tailoring Trades Union, the Iron and Brass Moulders Union and the Metalworkers Assistants all withdrew for similar reasons, and because they felt the CTLC was not criticising the Government enough. Specifically, the Tailors objected to the Liberal faction having defused criticism of the IC&A Amendment Bill.⁹⁸ Barr and his allies had on one occasion staged a walkout from the Council, depriving it of a

97. McCullough to Paul, 13 Jan 1907, JTP 982/194.

98. LT 13 Jul 1909, 9.

quorum, to do this, according to James Thorn.⁹⁹

Some other unions left because they were allied to or supported the Liberal Party. The Hotel Employees, the Bricklayers, and the ASCJ were such unions; the ASCJ sent word that its decision was 'on account of the lack of interest displayed by a majority of the delegates in anything having for its object the advancement of trades unionism, and stating its opinion that the Council was being used for political purposes, by certain political factions.¹⁰⁰ A further complaint from the Liberal unions concerned the structure of the Council. Delegates were apportioned on the basis of the number of members in each union, and with the growth in membership of some large and militant unions, the socialist voice in the Council was stronger. The General Labourers and the Drivers - who reaffiliated once the Council set up a committee to look into its complaints¹⁰¹. - were particular examples of this. John Barr proposed that each union have the same number of delegates,¹⁰² and this was taken up by some unions. When the Council rejected the proposal, the Hotel Workers (with which Barr was closely associated) withdrew.

In the midst of the wrangling, the CTLC held its annual election of offices. The result did not help to reconcile the opposing factions: a socialist Executive was elected. Ted Howard of the General Labourers became President; his deputies were Bob Whiting of the Bootmakers and Dan Sullivan of the Furniture Trades. James Young of the Tramway Workers became Secretary;

99. LT 7 Oct 1909, 8.

100. TLC 20 Mar 1909.

101. TLC 17 Apr 1909.

102. LT 6 Feb 1909, 13.

his assistant was Pat Darcy, and Hiram Hunter of the Drivers was on the Executive.¹⁰³ Sullivan, for one, came out fighting, declaring that the Council discussed political issues chiefly of concern to the workers. He pointed out that the Labour faction had not indulged in secession when it was in the minority, and charged that the object of the dissidents in the Council 'was to prejudice any future criticism of the Government, as such criticism might be damaging to the credit of certain delegates who desired to stand well with the Government'.¹⁰⁴ Barr returned the fire, stating that the new Executive was more interested in 'building a political organisation' than in trade unionism.¹⁰⁵

No one had expected that the election of the Executive would finish the fighting. The Council issued a manifesto to all unions warning that 'continued progress of the secession movement is fraught with the possibility of the complete wreckage of organised labour in Canterbury' and calling for unity to achieve 'all that has yet to be accomplished before Labour has attained its rightful place'. The manifesto went on to list the Council's recent achievements, including a minimum of 8s per day for relief workers, and the removal of certain objectionable clauses from the 1908 amendments to the IC&A Act. These included the restrictions on union office-holders, the proposal to abolish unions' jurisdiction over under-rate workers, and some of the penalty clauses.¹⁰⁶ The move to independent Labour was also strong in the national conference of Trades Councils; a motion calling for

103. TLC 10 Jul 1909.

104. Ibid.

105. LT 17 Jul 1909, 13.

106. TLC 16 Oct 1909.

Delegates at the Trades and Labour Councils' Conference, May 1905. Jack McCullough and John Barr are in the upper row, 4th and 5th from left. They do not look at ease in each others' company - McCullough thought Barr was a crawler to the Liberals, and Barr thought McCullough was cynically using the TLC for political motives.

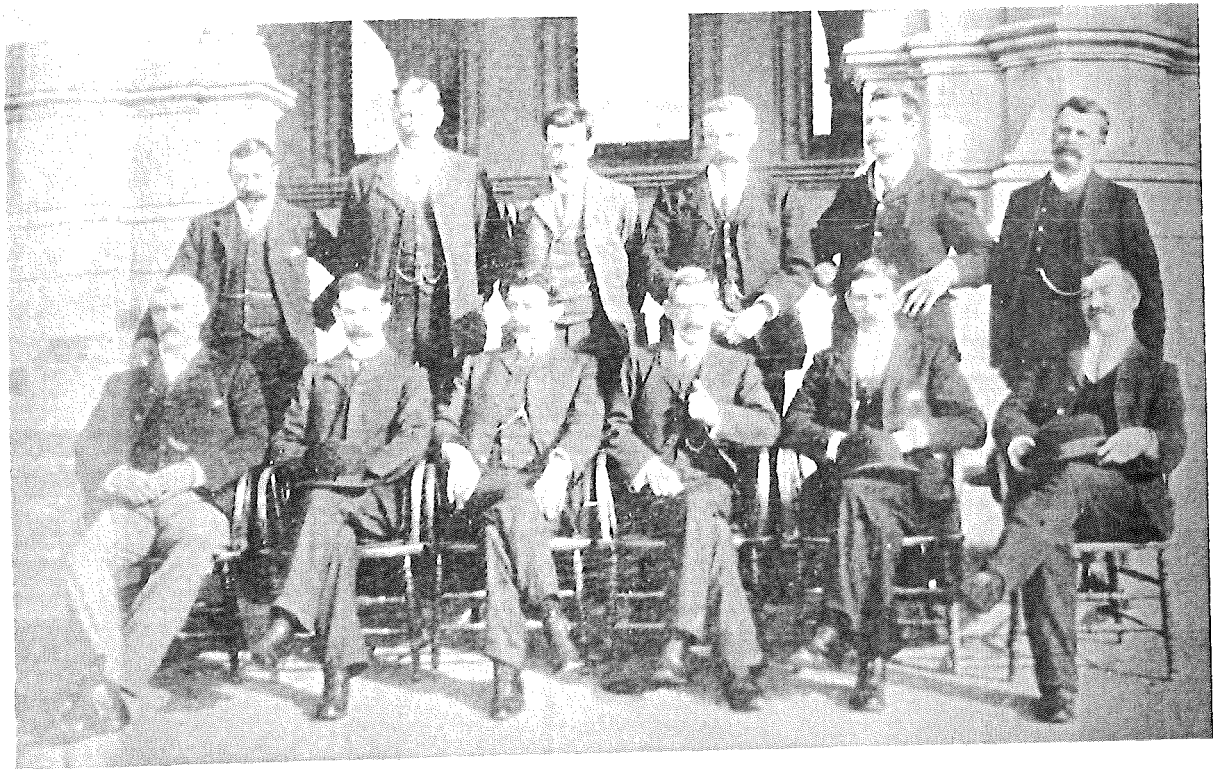
- Canterbury Times 10 May 1905, 36.

Leading lights in the socialist faction of the Trades Council:

back row: Arthur Paterson (General Labourers' Union);
Hiram Hunter (Drivers' Union); Fred Ellis
(Tailoring Trades Union);
front row: Ted Howard (Labourers' Union); Alfred Hart
(Painters' Union); Dan Sullivan (Furniture
Trades Union).

The six of them served on the Celebration Committee for the TLC Picnic, 1909.

- Canterbury Times 27 Oct 1909, 46.



the Councils to 'take definite action in endeavouring to return Labour members to Parliament' was carried by 22 to 2.¹⁰⁷ There would have been no one voting against the motion if John Barr and Henry Rusbridge had not disregarded their instructions from the CTLC.¹⁰⁸

The Trades Councils moved at their annual conference in 1910 to give effect to their resolution of the previous year, when they set up the first New Zealand Labour Party.¹⁰⁹ The Canterbury TLC had urged the conference to form a platform of the nationalisation of land and banking, and political reform;¹¹⁰ it was strengthened by the return of some unions which had withdrawn over political questions.¹¹¹ The CTLC remained firmly under the control of the independent Labour faction, but as the influence of the Liberal-allied unionists faded, there arose a new faction, often more aggressive than many of the socialist union leaders. This new faction was composed of unions affiliated to or sympathetic with the New Zealand Federation of Labour, or Red Feds. The Red Federation had grown out of the Miners' Federation, organised in 1908 after the Blackball strike. It was centred on mining, shearing, waterside, and labouring unions. The Federation had a policy of withdrawing from the arbitration system and pursuing direct negotiation with employers. Since such negotiations were always backed by the implied threat of strike action, the Federation's opponents accused it of wantonly and recklessly imposing strikes on workers and the country at large. That was

107. LT 29 Oct 1909, 11.

108. TLC, 8 Jan 1910.

109. See above pp183-86.

110. TLC 5 Feb 1910.

111. LT 26 Jan 1910, 6.

exaggerated; the Federation was involved in few strikes, and its longest and most bitter battles, at Waihi and Reefton, were forced upon it by the employers. The Federation's opponents in the Trades Councils - which had also organised themselves into a Federation - used harsh rhetoric against the Federation, which replied in kind.

The advocates of arbitration did not have their task made any easier by the continuing presidency on the Court of Mr. Justice Sim. Long notorious among unions for his 'crude interruptions, bumptious advice, and scant attention to evidence',¹¹². Sim continued to enrage moderate unions. In 1910 the New Zealand Shearers' Union applied for a wage rise of £1 per 100 sheep. The Court awarded 18s, with the result that the Shearers refused to work for less than £1. Farmers had little alternative but to pay up; the Union could not be touched by the law since it quite correctly pointed out that Court awards only specified minimum rates of pay. As employers sometimes say, if you don't like the wages, you don't have to work.... Sim was highly displeased at the Union's successful manipulation of the law, and in the Canterbury district hearing told Mick Laracy that someone 'with more intelligence' should be conducting the case.¹¹³. Sim's name was greeted with hoots at a public meeting in the Square.¹¹⁴ At the end of 1910 the Court refused to grant an award to shedhands; Sim held, with the employers' advocate, that no real dispute existed. As in the 1908 Farm Labourers' case, Jack McCullough issued a dissenting opinion.¹¹⁵ It was not surprising

112. Hickey, p5.

113. LT 15 Jul 1910, 5.

114. LT 18 Jul 1910, 8.

115. LT 23 Nov 1910, 3; 30 Nov 1910, 6.

that some unions began to consider direct action. The General Labourers met for their annual conference at the end of 1910 and decided to press for a wage of 1'3 per hour - a 25% rise in some cases - and to use the Arbitration Court only as the 'last alternative' to direct negotiation with employers.¹¹⁶ Employers' organisations, for their part, claimed that prices had actually fallen and that 50% of workers received above-award wages. The CEA felt that the Arbitration Court had 'done its duty faithfully', and claimed that output was falling due to the occurrence of revolutionary socialism among the workers.¹¹⁷ The views of the employers were supported by the Court; Sim refused to grant a wage rise to the Gisborne Painters on the ground that prices had fallen. The employers' views were also supported by John Barr; he felt that 'there is more good than harm' in the Judge's words, and that discontent among workers was really caused by 'a hankering after the excitement of the strike'.¹¹⁸

Yet there was much evidence that wages had not kept up with prices; in many industries by 1910 there had been no rises in award wages since 1906 or even earlier. Barr himself cited woollen mill workers and boot tradesmen, both of whom were on wages fixed in 1901 or 1902. The engineering trade had been on the same rate since 1898. Coachbuilders, printers and bookbinders had all been on the same pay since 1906. Furniture workers had had no rise since their first award.¹¹⁹ Alfred Hart, a past president of the CTLC who as late as December 1908 had endorsed the Liberal Party, wrote that the power of employers had grown so great that

116. LT 29 Dec 1910, 7.

117. LT 19 Aug 1910, 11.

118. LT 7 Jan 1911, 12.

119. LT 21 Jan 1911, 13.

there was no alternative but to strike for higher pay and better conditions; 'lately the workers have found to their sorrow that the Court operates in favour of the employers, and now the unions, or most of them, are afraid to go near it'.

Hart felt that

The only bright gleam of hope is the fact that the Shearers' and Miners' Federations are out for reform. The Labour Party is coming on in leaps and bounds. The Trades Councils and the progressive unions have found that suggestions in regard to industrial problems (to the Government) are a sheer waste of time, and are now out to secure the parliamentary machinery.¹²⁰.

Unfortunately, few organisations or individuals adopted Hart's 'fight on all fronts' strategy. Arthur Paterson, secretary of the General Labourers' Union, was one who did. He quoted the American Socialist, Eugene Debs, in support of his views.¹²¹. The socialist majority in the CTLC saw the problem as being the ease with which employers could pass on award wage rises to consumers; that is, back to the workers themselves. The Council advocated the 'gradual public ownership' of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, through nationalisation by a Labour Government. It concentrated far less than formerly on matters of wages and conditions, of immediate concern to workers, or at least it did not have a clear strategy for dealing with an Arbitration Court and a Government that were hostile on these matters. The Red Federation, for its part, tended to disregard the power of state organisations, and had no plans for attempting to control or influence such organisations. There were further problems within the CTLC over the appropriate form for a Labour Party to take. The majority of the Labour faction favoured a broad-based party involving non-working class radicals. The New

120. LT 22 Oct 1910, 6.

121. LT 30 Nov 1910, 6.

Zealand Shearers' Union, the Canterbury branch of which was a member of the CTLC, had a different programme. The Shearers advocated a party based entirely on trade unions, and this led to some bitter exchanges.¹²² This argument was part of the background to the establishment by the Shearers of the Maoriland Worker, edited at first by Ettie Rout in opposition to the TLC's Wellington-based paper, the Weekly Herald.¹²³ In February 1911 the Shearers voted by six to one to join the Red Federation.¹²⁴

The Trades Councils and the Red Federation made an attempt in August 1910 to find a basis for unity into one national Labour federation. This was a conference between Bob Whiting, Tom Paul, Robert Breen, and James Young for the Councils, and Paddy Webb, Robert Semple, John Glover, and Patrick Hickey for the Federation; it was chaired by Jack McCullough. The meeting arose out of a proposal put to Semple by the Otago TLC. He demanded the conference be held in Christchurch or Dunedin, as he refused to meet with 2 unspecified North Islanders who had opposed the Federation.¹²⁵ After some arguing over who had the right to the name of New Zealand Federation of Labour, those present tried to see if there was any way to begin progress to unity. The Red Fed leaders refused to commit themselves on any point without a referendum of all their members; the Trades Council representatives wanted the conference to work out a draft constitution for a united federation, and they also proposed that the Red Fed unions join the TLC Federation and change it from within. Neither proposal was acceptable. There was also some discussion on matters of principle. Paul stated that the Red Federation advocated the

122. Nolan, 99; see above, p187.

123. Nolan, 99.

124. LT 14 Feb 1911, 7.

125. JTP 982/58, n.d. typescript.

abolition of craft unions and the Arbitration Court. In reply, Semple said that the Federation was not opposed to the Arbitration Court being used by small unions, but that there was no advantage in it for the larger unions. The Federation favoured concentrating on industrial organisation, in which unions would federate and use their power for direct negotiation and action. Political organisation would grow out of that. On this point the conference broke up; as Hickey said to the Trades Council people, 'You are asking us to join your organisation and make rules afterwards. We ask you to keep out of our organisation until you agree with the basic principles'. The conference concluded with mutual expressions of esteem and recognition of the honest intentions of both sides.¹²⁶

The Red Federation grew in strength throughout 1911. In Christchurch major unions that joined included the Shearers, the Labourers, and the Waterside Workers. The watersiders cancelled their registration under the 1894 Act, as a prelude to direct bargaining, by a 75% majority of a ballot of all members. This was a turnaround from the position voiced by the union's leaders earlier, at the national conference. There, the North Island unions had been in favour of the Red Federation while Henry Voyce and John Reid of Lyttelton had expressed opposition.¹²⁷ Speaking on the decision of the Lyttelton workers, Voyce said he 'was not surprised at the result of the ballot, for the workers had come to the conclusion that the Court, as at present constituted, had out-lived its usefulness and did not exist for the betterment

126. Typescript by Ettie Rout, JTP 982/374.

127. LT 10 Oct 1911, 7; 1 Sept 1911, 8.

of conditions for the working man'.¹²⁸. The General Labourers accompanied their membership of the Red Federation by a withdrawal from the CTLC, after the CTLC had refused to consider joining the Federation.¹²⁹. In Auckland the miners, shearers, aerated water -workers, brewery workers, and general labourers all cancelled their registration under the IC&A Act within a short time of each other. Many unions were seeing less and less advantage in the arbitration system, even regarding the limitation of its concern to wages and conditions. By the end of 1912 unions representing 4700 of the 12000 or more unionists in Canterbury had withdrawn from the arbitration system, joined the Red Federation, or otherwise expressed strong disapproval of the 'arbitration system. They were Watersiders, Drivers, Metal Workers' Assistants, Engineers, Moulders, Shearers, Slaughtermen, General Labourers, and Tailors. Dan Sullivan was close to the mark when he complained that the progress of the United Labour Party was retarded by the attitudes of the unions in Christchurch; he said that one third were Red Fed, one third Liberal, and one third split.¹³⁰.

The Trades Councils' action at this time concentrated on the building-up of the NZLP. Among the issues discussed at the 1911 conference of the TLC Federation were protection of the iron trade, safety on wharves, a legal minimum wage of 1'3 per hour, and a maximum 44 hour week.¹³¹. While the CTLC had not ceased to be aware of the hardship faced by workers, its remedies were

128. LT 10 Oct 1911, 7.

129. TLC 18 Feb 1911, 4 Aug 1911.

130. LT 24 Jul 1911, 8. McCarthy V, 20 Sept 1912.

131. LT 19 Apr 1911, 10; 19 Apr 1911, 3.

increasingly parliamentary, and therefore removed somewhat from workplace and day-to-day problems. Many felt that this was reflected in the Exhibition of Colonial Products organised by the CTLC with a pound-for-pound subsidy from the Government. The Exhibition lasted a month and although praised by employers, was not universally welcomed by workers. One anonymous worker felt that it was 'a great exhibition, in which are shown all the signs of what a fine slave the New Zealand worker is to the employing class'. It was also noted that, at the Exhibition dinner, Dan Sullivan, the CTLC president, had toasted the Government. Moreover, the Council did not meet for ordinary business for two months on account of the Exhibition.¹³² Apart from the General Labourers, other unions that withdrew from the CTLC in 1911 were the Canterbury Carpenters and Joiners, the Cycle Workers, the Brewers and Maltsters, and the Freezers' Unions. Presumably these Liberal oriented unions withdrew in protest at the Council's increasingly high political profile. Major efforts were made by the Council in the 1911 municipal elections, with some success.¹³³

It seemed that a number of unions throughout the country were greatly dissatisfied with the arbitration system by 1912, for there was a wave of secessions from the Act and returns to direct bargaining. At first, these attempts at direct bargaining had some success. Waterside workers secured a national agreement giving substantial wage rises by this means, even though the employers at first regarded the demands as 'unreasonable'.¹³⁴

132. TLC 18 Feb 1911; LT 27 Oct 1911, 7; 27 Nov 1911, 9; TLC 14 Oct 1911.

133. See below pp193-195.

134. LT 12 Jan 1912, 7.

The seamen followed suit.¹³⁵ The Trades Councils seemed unable to propose an alternative to direct bargaining, and were almost on the defensive; Dan Sullivan claimed that there was 'no possibility of the Federation of Labour...ever being able to accomplish anything worthwhile on behalf of the workers',¹³⁶ but a growing number of unions did not agree. The CTLC lost the Metal Workers Assistants, the Boilermakers, the Iron and Brass Moulders, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The ASE 'considered the Council had outlived its usefulness'.¹³⁷

Sympathy for the Red Federation was growing; the Moulders appeared to consider joining it, although the Boilermakers showed little interest. Their withdrawal from the CTLC was apparently because they were more interested in their own role as a craft union.¹³⁸ The Canterbury Drivers' Union held a referendum on cancelling its registration, and a majority of voters, though not of members, were in favour; the union had to stay within the 1894 system.¹³⁹ By the end of 1912 the CTLC was without a number of large unions. In addition to the metal trades unions mentioned above, the Council did not have in it the General Labourers (1206 members), the Tailors (413), the Freezers (230), the Canterbury Carpenters and Joiners (346), the ASCJ (286), the Hotel Workers (389), the Bricklayers (115), or the Brickmakers (126).¹⁴⁰ Some guesswork is involved in working out the reasons why some of these unions had left the CTLC. Both carpenters' unions and the hotelworkers' union favoured 'non-political' or Liberal-allied unionism; the clothing unions had a little

135. LT 26 Jan 1912, 7.

136. LT 24 Feb 1912, 12.

137. TLC 29 Feb 1912, 21 Nov 1912, 18 Jul 1912.

138. IBM 20 Sept 1912; BM 15 Oct 1912.

139. LT 7 Mar 1912, 8.

140. LT 2 Apr 1912, 8.

difficulty maintaining their own organisations. The General Labourers were one of the most militant unions in the city, and strongly supported the Red Federation. As a rule, though, few Canterbury unions won major victories by direct bargaining; the watersiders, shearers, and general labourers were among those few. Most continued to value the legal security of the Arbitration Court's awards.

Although employers had suffered a number of reverses at direct negotiations, it was not long before they mounted a counter-attack. This began in Auckland, where the General Labourers' Union had demanded a wage rise to 10 shillings per day. The employers refused to recognise the union as long as it remained outside the arbitration system. A fortnight later, the Auckland City Council conceded a large wage rise to its labourers and proclaimed that such an increase was better than anything the GLU could have gained. The City Council then organised the Auckland and Suburban Local Bodies' Labourers, a breakaway from the GLU, which was seriously weakened by the loss of 158 of its 950 members. The Canterbury General Labourers' Union was outraged. When the Auckland breakaway body wrote and asked for assistance in framing an award, Arthur Paterson, the Canterbury union's secretary, wrote:

I have been instructed to reply and ask you, would you kindly send the names and addresses, together with photograph, if possible, of each of your members, so that should we meet in hell we can avoid them, having no time for blacklegs, either dead or alive.

The objects of this correspondence did not take it lying down, and replied with references to 'the honest British Labourer and true unionist', and to 'traitors, scabs, and moral vipers'.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹. LT 25 Jul 1912, 4.

The Auckland Farmers' Union organised members willing to serve as strikebreakers or special constables should the strike be broken by force. The whole episode can be seen as a rehearsal for the Waihi strike later in the year.¹⁴² In Christchurch, the City Council refused to accept an agreement with the slaughtermen's assistants at the municipal abattoir, and kept its drivers to 1s per hour for a 49 hour week, exclusive of horse care.¹⁴³ The Auckland case was the first major defeat suffered by the Red Federation, but in the months before the strike at Waihi broke out, direct bargaining continued to score some victories, especially for miners. The Arbitration Court even seemed to be prepared to accept direct bargaining; in May 1912 Sim refused to bring down an award to override a collective agreement reached between the Auckland Waterside Workers' Union and 90% of their employers.¹⁴⁴

The Red Federation, at its conference the same month, adopted a syndicalist form of organisation, providing for the formation of industrial departments along the lines of the American-based Industrial Workers of the World. The IWW constitution was also adopted, which proclaimed that 'the working-class and the employing-class have nothing in common' and that it was 'the historic mission of the working-class to do away with capitalism'.¹⁴⁵ At the time of the conference, the Waihi strike was two weeks old.

In Christchurch, the Federation and the Trades Council - or

142. LT 17 Feb 1912, 9; 5 Mar 1912, 7; 7 Mar 1912, 8; 31 Jul 1912, 8; H. Roth, 'Peter Fraser and the General Labourers', Here and Now, Nov 1952, 11.

143. LT 5 Mar 1912, 8; 27 Mar 1912, 10.

144. LT 8 May 1912, 10; 16 May 1912, 7.

145. LT 28 May 1912, 8; Hickey, 65.

rather, the United Labour Party, of which the CTLC was a founding constituent - waged war for the allegiance of the unions. The emphasis of the Trades Councils seemed to be almost entirely on building a political movement; they concentrated on organising for municipal and general elections. For about eighteen months, from mid 1911 to the end of 1912 they were assisted in this by the American propagandist, 'Professor' Walter Thomas Mills. Mills assisted the NZLP throughout 1911. As well as helping in the general election campaign, Mills sold a 'Unity Scheme' to the Trades Councils; this scheme was the basis for the United Labour Party formed in April 1912 by the Trades Councils' conference. Consisting of one single organisation of unions and individuals, for industrial and political issues alike, the ULP had as its objects the following:

1. To promote the organisation of all the workers of New Zealand in all forms of necessary service;
2. To protect their interests in the matter of regular, rational, and remunerative employment;
3. To promote their good citizenship and increase their efficiency;
4. To consolidate the political power of the workers in their own behalf, and to use their whole power (both political and economic) in negotiations with employers, in the courts, in municipal, county, and Parliamentary bodies, in international relations, and (if need be) in industrial revolt;
5. To use the fruits of every partial victory to strengthen and continue this work until the power to oppress and exploit any of the workers, either by private monopolies controlling the Government, or through the private monopoly ownership and control of industry, shall utterly disappear, and there shall be secured for all the people power to purchase with their income the total products of their labour - until, in short, the means of production, distribution, and exchange (insofar as they constitute in private hands instruments of oppression and exploitation) shall be socially owned and operated without profit and for the common good of all.¹⁴⁶.

There is evidence that the ULP was, in fact, an attempt by a

number of businessmen of Liberal leanings to divert and control labour militancy for their own ends.¹⁴⁷ Certainly clause 3, promoting workers' good citizenship and increasing their efficiency, would have been music to the ears of the Canterbury Employers' Association - 'efficiency', a euphemism for increasing the profit made out of each worker, had been one of their buzzwords for years. The ULP seems to have been led by various types of unionists - those on the right wing, such as Paul and McLaren, and to a lesser extent Dan Sullivan;¹⁴⁸ and those such as Jack McCullough and Arthur McCarthy of Dunedin, who had serious reservations about Red Fed tactics and regarded the ULP as the best alternative offering. That this was the attitude of such as McCullough and McCarthy is shown by the speed with which they ditched the ULP for the Social Democratic Party in 1913.¹⁴⁹ For 1912, however, the battle was Red Feds versus ULP.

As far as union organisation was concerned, the ULP devoted all its efforts to persuading individual unions to join. The ULP made no concrete proposals regarding the working of the arbitration system; it seemed as though reform in this area would have to await the election of enough Labour MPs to force or enact reform. This offered no solution to the immediate problems in the arbitration system. It is likely that ULP Members of Parliament would have given attention to the arbitration system had the Liberal Government survived beyond 1912, but the balance of political forces in New Zealand had changed

147. Bert Roth 'Buying a Labour Party'.

148. Jack McCullough was always suspicious of Sullivan's tendency to sympathise with employers; see Nolan, p 189.

149. The McCarthy Papers support this.

too much by then. Despite its lack of attention to immediate issues and its concentration on reforms to be achieved by a Labour-controlled Parliament, the ULP received the support of a number of Christchurch unions. These unions knew by experience that direct action was unlikely to work for them; moreover, the ULP's organisers in Christchurch - Dan Sullivan, Hiram Hunter, Jack McCullough, and Bob Whiting - were able and respected socialists and their views must have had considerable weight with unions. Since the ULP concentrated on parliamentary politics and reforms to be achieved through those means, the bitter conflict between the ULP and the Red Feds was conducted mostly in those terms.¹⁵⁰ The Federationists and their Socialist Party allies, especially Ted Howard of the GLU, Fred Cooke of the Tailoring Trades, and Harry Campbell, also a labourer, derided the ULP and claimed that direct action had in a few months done more for the workers who used it than the arbitration system had achieved in fifteen years. John Barr retorted to this line of argument that the General Labourers' Union, with a current membership of over 1000, had fluctuated between 15 and 45 before the Arbitration Court had given it a preference clause.¹⁵¹

The ULP organisers did not have an easy job in Christchurch. Five months after it was established, Sullivan wrote to Arthur McCarthy, complaining of the problems. According to Sullivan, one third of the unions in Canterbury were aligned with the Liberal Party; a considerable number belonged to the 'Revolutionary school', including the meat trades as well as the GLU and

150. See below pp201-4.

151. LT 9 Feb 1912, 5.

some metal unions; and a number of others were equally divided. Money was a further problem; most unions were fully committed to the CTLC and to their own trade federations. The CTLC was in bad shape in 1912, Sullivan wrote; the Exhibition had been plagued by 'drunkenness and dishonesty' on the part of some officials, and James Young had resigned as Secretary amid an inquiry into his stewardship. The Exhibition troubles had resulted in Magistrate's Court hearings. Municipal and general election expenses 'still hang over us, with daily threats of summonses'. Sullivan also referred to

the murderous attacks of the revolutionaries who are tireless in their efforts against us; all these things have had the effect of killing off the enthusiasm of the rank and file who seem absolutely paralysed, and only a few men like Whiting and myself, have kept our heads above water and struggled with whatever courage we could muster against the terrible combination of adverse circumstances. It is...publicly recognised, that only my own terrific efforts saved the Canterbury Trades Council from extinction during the past year.... Little wonder that my nervous system has been shattered, and that insomnia and grey hairs have come to me ere thirty has been reached. Even now it is impossible to get anything done unless the same men, who are trying to do everything else, are willing to do it. I have been trying to arrange for a deputation from the Council Executive to wait on the Unions to urge their affiliation to the Party, but all plead incapacity, each time, etc., and again 'move' that Mr. Whiting or 'Mr. Sullivan' do it...'.152.

Some Christchurch unions did join the ULP. The Operative Bootmakers, the Grocers' Assistants, the Typographical Association, the Painters, the Furniture Trades, Tailoring Trades, the Drivers affiliated.¹⁵³ As Sullivan had told McCarthy, though, many did not, or kept deferring a decision until the Unity Congress of January 1913 made the ULP redundant.

152. McCarthy, fold V, 20 Sept 1912; TLC 25 Apr 1912.

153. McC II, Mc IV, FTU 11 Dec 1912, TT 10 Dec 1912, LT 23 Jun 1912, 7.

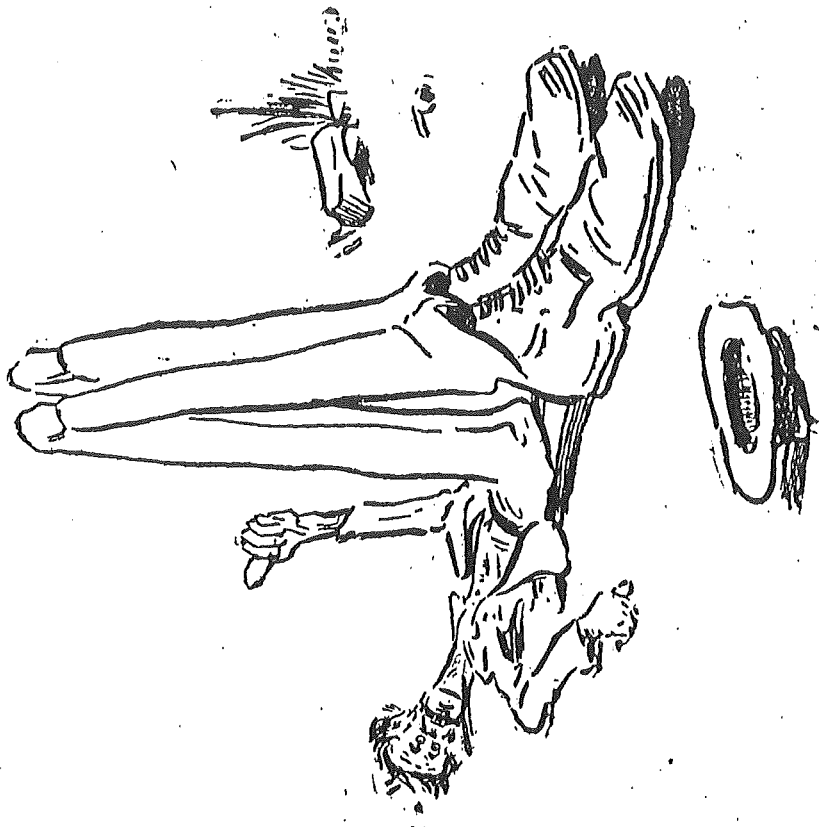
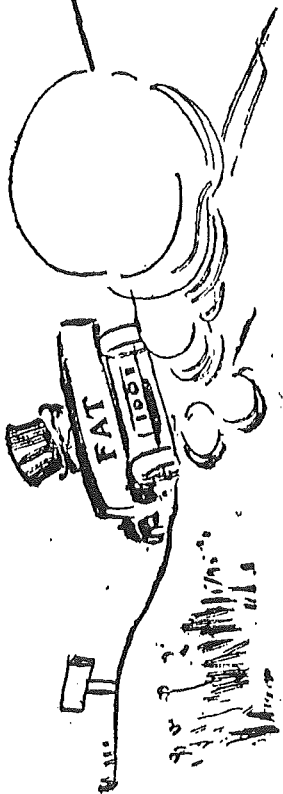
The worst conflict between the Red Feds and the ULP was, naturally enough, over the strikes at Waihi and Reefton. The Waihi miners went out in protest at the formation of a company-sponsored arbitration union in opposition to the Federation; the Reefton strike was over safety. Both may be seen as part of an employers' offensive against union militancy; the situation at Waihi had been presaged by the Auckland City Council's forming a breakaway labourers' union. The Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury Trades Councils refused to give any aid to the strikes. Sullivan, who conducted the CTLC column in the Lyttelton Times, criticised the strike frequently as evidence of the Red Fed's violent and barbaric intent.¹⁵⁴ The Federation responded vigorously, pointing out that the strikers had acted with exemplary orderliness and discipline.¹⁵⁵ Ted Howard called Dan Sullivan one of a number of 'paid servants of the master class'.¹⁵⁶ Sullivan's attitude was shared by Mills and by George Fowlds, one of the Liberal businessmen in the ULP and a recently-resigned Cabinet Minister. With J. T. Paul, Mills, Fowlds, Bob Whiting, and David McLaren (the country's first Labour MP) had all wished to openly condemn the strike. Jack McCullough and the four sitting Labour MPs refused to consider such a 'betrayal of labour principle...to do anything which might be used to the detriment of workers who, right or wrong, are fighting common enemy'.¹⁵⁷ The CTLC eventually passed a motion calling for the release of jailed strikers as 'the men at Waihi have already been more than sufficiently punished for any offence they

154. LT 17 Aug 1912, 16.

155. LT 24 Sept 1912, 4.

156. LT 20 Aug 1912, 8.

157. Telegram by McCullough, quoted Roth 'ULP', 30.



GOOD SAMARITANISM IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

ONE OF THE USEFUL PEOPLE: What has happened, brother?

VICTIM: Can't you see? I've been run over by the Fat Man's car.

THE USEFUL PERSON: What is your name and religion?

VICTIM: Jack Smith, Federation of Labor.

THE USEFUL PERSON: All right, Smith. I can't help you now, but I'll send you a copy of the United Labor Party's platform next week. In the meantime, get busy on my 'Struggle for Existence', post paid or over the counter, two dollars.

The Red Federation and the ULP fought bitterly over the Waihi strike. The Federation resented the lack of support from the ULP, and regarded 'Professor' Walter Thomas Mills, the ULP organiser, as a self-seeking fraud. In this view they were correct.

may have committed'.¹⁵⁸. Many individual unions were rather more sympathetic, and voted financial aid to the strikers. Once the strike had been broken by armed police and strike-breakers, in early November, and a striker killed, the climate changed. Sullivan was silent, and a wave of grief, horror, and anger swept Christchurch workers. Thousands were unable to get into the King's Theatre to hear Robert Semple castigate the Massey Government and the employers.¹⁵⁹. Numerous unions called for a public inquiry.

More significant, however, was the acknowledgement by the Federation of Labour of the need to reconsider its organisation and tactics. On 27 November it issued an invitation to all unions, craft and industrial, Federation, ULP, and nonaligned, to a conference in January 1913 to consider ways of defending the Labour movement against Massey's Government and of forming a more united organisation.¹⁶⁰. The Federation was in as bad a position as the CTLC: not only had its policy of direct action suffered a bloody defeat, but several unions had, in the second half of 1912, seceded from it. These included some of the smaller watersiders' and miners' unions on the West Coast, the Dunedin Waterside Workers, the Auckland Brewery Workers, and the Auckland Tramway Workers. Some of the Federations' member unions had not favoured the 24 hour protest strike called by the Federation's executive.¹⁶¹. Some criticism among Federation unions of their executive for not calling the strike off earlier, when it was

158. TLC 10 Oct 1912.

159. LT 18 Nov 1912, 7; MW 29 Nov 1912, 7.

160. Hickey, 56-7.

161. LT 17 Jul 1912, 10; 22 Jul 1912, 7; 19 Sept 1912, 7; 9 Nov 1912, 14; 19 Oct 1912, 12; 10 Oct 1912, 7.

clearly lost, was reported.^{162.}

Despite such problems within the Federation, and the tepid response of some of the ULP leadership, the Unity Congress invitation was welcomed. Unions all over the country responded enthusiastically to the invitation, pushed along by a rank and file sick of the division and all too aware of the threat posed by aggressively militant Government and employers combining against the Labour movement. When the conference opened on 20 January 1913 it was hailed as the largest and most representative labour gathering ever held in Australasia.

^{162.} LT 14 Nov 1912, 7.

CHAPTER FOURTRYING TO BUILD A LABOUR PARTY 1905-1912

A Liberal Government that was increasingly hostile to workers' aspirations for a satisfactory wage, secure employment, and control over workplace organisation and labour processes convinced many unionists of the need to form an independent labour party. In Christchurch the advocates of such a party had two main obstacles. First, they had to displace the radical Liberals who dominated electoral politics in this city.¹ This task lasted until after the First World War. The second task was to convince workers and unions that concentrating on parliamentary action was the correct strategy; until about 1909 many unions still believed that the parliamentary field could be left to the Liberal Party, and after 1909 the Red Federation of Labour mounted a strong campaign for confining organisation to the workplace.

Christchurch was the country's biggest stronghold of radical Liberalism before 1914. In 1899 Richard John Seddon had tried, with some success, to quieten dissident trade unionists by the formation of the Liberal and Labour Federation.² The object of this organisation, as well as making a bow in the direction of the workers, was 'to systematize and centralise electoral management'; in short, to create a political party with mass organisation, centred on the leadership of Seddon.³

1. Scotter, 193-4.
2. Gustafson, 17.
3. Richardson, 205.

This organisation was less successful in Canterbury than elsewhere; here, the radical Liberal politicians had personal power-bases which were more important. The Progressive Liberal Association was formed in 1893 as a breakaway from the official Canterbury Liberal Association. The radical Liberal politicians who sat for various Christchurch seats between the 1890s and 1919 - Tommy Taylor, Harry Ell, Thomas Davey, William Tanner, and George Laurenson - all had links with the Progressive Liberal Association. The Association's platform contained such policies as the compulsory repurchase of land, a graduated land tax, free education to university level, universal suffrage for all local bodies, protective tariffs for industry, old age pensions, and the simple majority on all referenda.⁴ This last policy linked the Progressive Liberals with the prohibition movement, in which many of them were active. Some of the radical Liberals also had strong links with trade unions: Tanner was a bootmaker by trade, Harry Ell had helped organise the Tailloresses' and Pressers' Union, and Davey, a printer, had been Father of the Chapel (union president) at the Lyttelton Times, and a founder of the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council.⁵ All the radical Liberals were associated to some extent with the New Liberal Party of 1905, which attempted to reform the Liberal Party and lessen the autocratic hold of Seddon over it.⁶ Equally, all of them, except possibly Taylor, declined invitations to join the various labour parties established after 1905; they were simply not prepared to work in socialist organisations.⁷ These were the politicians that the advocates of an independent labour party had to displace.

4. Scotter, 193-4.

5. Scotter, 280-297; LT 9 Nov 1914, 6.

6. G. F. Whitcher, 'The New Liberal Party, 1905'.

7. See below, pl84.

I. The Political Labour League 1905-1909.

The Christchurch branch of the Political Labour League was established in February 1905 at a public meeting organised by the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council. The aim of the new party was 'the creation of a strong Labour Party in Parliament, which will yield no allegiance to any political leader other than one chosen from amongst themselves'.⁸ According to its manifesto, the League's creation was necessary because of a majority in Parliament that was opposed to any further labour legislation and 'to the most democratic principle in our land laws, namely nationalisation of the land'.⁹ The League was to be based on the trade unions but its membership would be open to all who accepted its principles. One of these principles was a pledge to accept the rule of the League's caucus in Parliament; this drew the most opposition from radical Liberals and the Liberal newspaper, the Lyttelton Times. John Rigg, MLC, the national president, said that the pledge was necessary since in the current Parliament 'many of the members were dependent on the Premier' for support and campaign funds. The resolution to form the Christchurch branch of the League was carried with four dissenters, and Harry Ell mentioned that there were 'many members in the House who had never turned their back on a labour measure, including Messrs Laurenson, Tanner, Taylor, Witty, Davey, Bedford, Arnold, and Sidey'. In John Rigg's view, however, labour had become a mere appendage of the Liberal Party, whereas its rightful place was as 'the controlling body in the alliance'.¹⁰

8. LT 25 Jan 1905, 6, 9.

9. Ibid.

10. LT 8 Feb 1905, 8.

The Lyttelton Times was quick to condemn the Political Labour League. The Times feared the division of the 'progressive' vote, condemned the League's constitution as 'tyrranical', and asserted that the League was attempting to 'introduce the direct conflict of capital and labour' to Parliament. The Times warned that in Australia the 'effect of the political rise of Labour has been to harden the ranks of the capitalists', and felt that the workers would do better to organise 'on a broad democratic basis' and attempt the reform of the Liberal Party from within.^{11.} In the view of the socialists who had founded the League, any such 'broad democratic front' would only be of much use to the workers if it was led by workers. Moreover, the 'ranks of the capitalists' had been hardening for years without any provocation from socialist political organisations.^{12.}

The formation of the Political Labour League was a victory for the socialist faction in the Trades Council. Christchurch's unions, however, were of differing opinions on the issue of independent political activity by the labour movement, and these differences were reflected in the almost even split in the Trades Council. In March 1905, therefore, the League conducted a campaign among the unions to secure affiliations and commissioned Jack McCullough, the socialists' leader in the Trades Council, Arthur Paterson, secretary of the General Labourers' Union, and Ernest Gohns, secretary of the Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union, for the purpose.^{13.} The deputation secured the affiliations of the Tinsmiths (of which McCullough was a member), the Blacksmiths,

11. LT editorials, 25, 30 Jan and 8, 9 Feb 1905.

12. LT, 9 Feb 1905, letter from Rigg.

13. PLL minutes 9 Mar 1905, EJH 192.

the Farriers, the Operative Bootmakers, the Traction and Stationary Engine Drivers, the Metalworkers' Assistants, the Coachworkers, the Furniture Trades, the General Labourers, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Some unions were most enthusiastic about the League: the Furniture Trades' Union was 'of the opinion that the thanks of all Unionists are due to the Trades and Labour Council for their action in forwarding the formation of same and thus giving the workers an opportunity of securing such representation in the Colony's Parliament as their numbers entitle them to'.¹⁴.

For a number of reasons, many unions refused to affiliate when approached by the League's deputation. These included the Tailoresses and Pressers, Saddlers, Iron and Brass Moulders, Boilermakers, Plumbers, the Stonemasons, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, and the Canterbury Carpenters' and Joiners' Union.¹⁵. The Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union regarded the timing as 'not opportune',¹⁶. which did not clearly define its attitude to parliamentary politics. The ASCJ was more forthright; it stated that involvement in parliamentary politics was outside the Trades Council's functions.¹⁷. This line was advanced by most Liberal unions against the socialists.

The socialists in the Trades Council had formed the PLL because they believed that a workers' party required a strong base in the trade unions. The Socialist Party, formed in 1901, lacked

14. Union minutes, 15 March 1905.

15. There is no complete record of which unions were affiliated to the PLL. I have gathered this list from the Lyttelton Times and union records.

16. Minutes, 7 Feb 1905.

17. LT 28 Feb 1905, 7.

such a base because the Liberals in the Trades Council had succeeded in denying it one.¹⁸ By 1905 the Socialist Party in Christchurch was acting chiefly as a forum for discussion and education; for example, the Party continued to discuss the relevance of working for reform within the existing system as opposed to a policy of going all-out for revolution.¹⁹ Early in 1905 the Christchurch Socialist Party elected as its secretary the able and militant union organiser, Fred Cooke. Cooke was English by birth and a foundation member of both the British Independent Labour Party and the Socialist Party in New Zealand;²⁰ he also devoted much time to organising workers in his own tailoring trade. Members of the Socialist Party allied themselves with the Political Labour League's supporters in trying to gain control of the Trades Council.²¹ The Socialist Party did not hesitate to differ with the PLL on specific questions, however; at one Party meeting Cooke claimed that the Socialist Party was the only one to advocate full equality for women, especially in wages.²² The Socialist Party and the Political Labour League complemented each other during 1905; the PLL was primarily concerned with achieving an independent Labour presence in Parliament, while the Socialist Party did a lot of valuable educational work in socialist principles and analysis.²³

The Political Labour League's growth throughout 1905 was fairly steady. In March it began to hold soapbox meetings on

18. See above, p

19. LT 6 Jan 1905, 4.

20. Gustafson, 155.

21. Roth, SP 55-6.

22. LT 25 Feb 1905, 8.

23. LT 8 Mar 1905, 3.

Saturday evenings in Cathedral Square. The municipal policy was issued; it called for municipal control of utilities, municipal food markets, and universal suffrage in local elections.²⁴ In late April the League polled the two candidates for the Mayoralty of the city on their attitudes to the League's manifesto. Although there was little difference between the candidates, the PLL endorsed the sitting Mayor, who was re-elected by a large majority.²⁵ The League's support is unlikely to have had much to do with this, however; labour did not become a force in local body politics until a democratic franchise was adopted in 1911.

When the League met for its national conference in April it claimed a thousand members across the country, in fourteen branches. The conference worked out a fighting platform for the General Election due at the end of 1905. Strangely, in view of the Trades Council's complaints on the subject, the League did not call for the nationalisation of land, but only for the revaluation of Crown leases and an end to the sale of Crown land. Other points in the League's platform included the establishment of a State bank with the sole right of note issue; compulsory preference to unionists; an end to overseas borrowing; equal pay for men and women; and constitutional reforms including the referendum with bare majority, initiative by citizens, a Cabinet elected by Parliament, and the abolition of the Legislative Council. In a retreat from his earlier position, John Rigg denied that the League had been organised for deposing the present Government or Mr. Seddon. It sought to have fair labour represen-

24. LT 24 Mar 1905, 2.

25. LT 26 Apr 1905, 4.

tation on municipal bodies and a strong labour party in Parliament!²⁶. The reluctance to mention nationalisation or to attack Seddon were concessions to the political climate. The League was warned in an editorial that it risked 'losing the sympathy of the great mass of workers who are not political unionists'.²⁷. In a year of relative prosperity, discontent and consideration of radical change were on the political agenda for few workers.

Since the League had to respond to this moderation, its platform differed little from the views of the radical Liberals who occupied Christchurch's parliamentary seats. The New Liberal Party, which was organised only for the 1905 election, expressed the radicals' long-held view that the Government had become both corrupt and reactionary under Seddon. When it was constituted in July 1906 the New Liberal Party declared its aim of 'securing constitutional reforms, improved administration of the colony's affairs, and a safe, definite, and progressive policy'.²⁸. The party's platform was nearly identical to that of the Political Labour League.²⁹. The only major difference, apart from the pledge, was that the New Liberal Party did not intend to nationalise the land, and was not specific on labour legislation. Some members of the PLL criticised the New Liberals on these grounds, but the League did not attempt to alter its own platform in a more radical direction.³⁰. Indeed, there was some debate within

26. LT 27 Apr 1905, 9.

27. LT 20 Apr 1905, 5.

28. LT 6 June 1905, 2.

29. LT 5 Jul 1905, 7.

30. LT 14 Jul 1905, 3.

the League as to whether Davey, Ell, and Tanner should be opposed at all.³¹ Since the League had established itself to provide adequate Parliamentary representation for the workers, it had little choice but to contest the election in working-class seats if it was to be credible, which was precisely where the radical Liberals were strongest. In Dunedin the League did in fact confine its activity to endorsing Liberal candidates. As Seddon had hoped, in Dunedin the PLL had reduced itself to 'a form of workers' political committee allied to the Liberals'.³² In part, Seddon achieved this by careful cultivation of the League's Dunedin leader, John Thomas Paul.

In Christchurch, the League decided to contest Avon, Christchurch East, and Christchurch South. Nominations were called, and three men came forward: Charles Lafferty, John Efford, and James Thorn. Electorates were then allocated. Riccarton went to Efford, who was a logical choice: he worked as a carriage-builder at the Addington Railway Workshops, and was involved in various lodges in the electorate.³³ Thorn defeated Lafferty for Christchurch South; at the age of 23 Thorn was already prominent in the Trades Council and in his own Iron and Brass Moulders' Union. Like Efford, he worked at Addington. Lafferty was asked to stand in Christchurch East but refused owing to his close association with the sitting member Thomas Davey. He had been Davey's electorate committee chairman and saw no reason to remove him from Parliament where he had 'done good work for the Labour Party', including supporting compulsory preference.³⁴

31. LT 28 Jul 1905, 7.

32. Gustafson, 18.

33. LT, 11 Sept 1905, 5; Letter from McCullough.

34. LT 18 Sept 1905, 4.

Fred Cooke therefore stood for the Socialist Party in Christchurch East, and the PLL chose one C. Baynes for Avon.

Candidates began campaigning in early October, two months before the election. Efford spoke in Riccarton and explained that in 1896 many successful candidates had been endorsed by trade unions, but the workers had received little benefit since. In addition to campaigning on the League's platform, Efford stated that he supported the Seddon Government but was not a 'Seddonite', and he advocated the continuation of public works only by loans raised within New Zealand, and the extension of nationalisation to include 'monopoly' industries.³⁵

Jimmy Thorn's campaign attracted the most attention and criticism, perhaps because it was the most effective. The Lyttelton Times castigated his candidacy as 'flagrant ingratitude' to Harry Ell, 'the firmest friend that the workers of Christchurch have ever had'.³⁶ Thorn was a pugnacious campaigner, accusing the Government of 'propitiating Conservatives in the matter of Crown Lands, catering for wool kings and lawyers'.³⁷ By this time the New Liberal Party had disintegrated following its 'unfounded libels' on Seddon,³⁸ but the party's leaders kept their popular support in Christchurch. The party remained in formal existence until after the election, campaigning as would-be reformers of the Liberal Party and denying that there was any need for an independent Labour party.³⁹

35. LT 6 Oct 1905, 3.

36. LT 14 Oct 1905, 4.

37. Ibid, 8.

38. Plumridge, 36, 'Labour in Christchurch'.

39. LT 13 Oct 1905, 3.

Ell, Tanner, Davey, and Witty campaigned on their records as sympathisers of the labour cause, and the Political Labour League campaigned on the basis that the workers' cause could no longer be served by the Liberal alliance. Fred Cooke, the Socialist Party candidate, spoke in more militant language, declaring that the class war was created by capitalism and existed in New Zealand.⁴⁰ The Socialists knew their Marxism; they were undertaking

a scientific, organised endeavour to overthrow the social disorder under which exploitation of the many by the few is a necessary condition for survival...to replace it by a system of social order in which all social means of production shall be socially owned.

They quoted the German Marxist, Karl Liebknecht:

Pity for poverty, enthusiasm for equality and freedom, recognition of social injustice and a desire to remove it is not Socialism.

Socialism meant recognition of class antagonisms and the abolition of the wage-system.⁴¹ Nor did this mean the replacement of private ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange by State ownership; Liebknecht defined this as State capitalism. Thus, a State bank would be of little use for the emancipation of the workers.⁴² Differences between the Political Labour League and the Socialist Party were not the object of bitter disputes in 1905; they became so in later years.

The Liberal members had on their side Seddon's enormous popularity, and they used this to the full. When Seddon spoke in the city, thousands of people were unable to get into the theatre to hear him. Both the Prime Minister and the local

40. LT 15 Nov 1905, 7.

41. LT 23 Dec 1905, 12.

42. LT 28 Dec 1905, 2.

Liberals campaigned on the Government's record in public works, land settlement, social security, and the standard of living.⁴³ Many delegates in the Trades Council continued to support the Liberals. John Barr, the Council's president, was censured by the Council for lending its name to a Liberal pamphlet, and the Political Labour League retaliated with a circular that called Barr and his supporters blacklegs.⁴⁴ But the Council continued to work with the local MPs, who supported the Council's election policy on all issues except land nationalisation.⁴⁵

In view of the many similarities between the policies of the Political Labour League and those of its opponents, as well as the strength of public support for both Seddon and the local radical Liberals, it is not surprising that the League's candidates did not do very well. In Christchurch South, Thorn came a narrow third with 1102 votes, the PLL's highest figure in the country; Ell won with 3660. Cooke received only 95 in Christchurch East; Davey won with 2612 and a New Liberal took 2051. In Riccarton, Efford did little better than Cooke with 102; George Witty, the official Liberal, won with 2278 and George Russell, a New Liberal sympathiser, received 671. In Avon, Baynes got 101 votes, to Tanner's 2293.⁴⁶ In the four seats, the Socialist and League candidates took 6% of the votes cast; over the country as a whole the League stood in eleven seats and got 4367 votes, also 6%.⁴⁷ Thorn was one of the League's stars with his total; the League could do little more than issue a manifesto recognising

43. LT 30 Nov 1905, 7; 14 Nov 1905, 5 (Tanner); 4 Nov 1905, 7 (Witty).

44. TLC Minutes 2 Dec 1905, 5; LT 4 Dec 1905, 9; 6 Dec 1905, 2.

45. TLC 21 June 1906.

46. LT 7 Dec 1905, 7.

47. Ibid, 7-8; Gustafson, 18.

the 'overwhelming odds' against which it had fought, including a shortage of money.^{48.}

Despite the meagre total of votes won, 1905 had marked the first practical assertion by the Labour movement of its independence in politics. The Political Labour League was founded upon the principle that the workers should be at the head of any broad democratic alliance, and the reality that the Liberal Party no longer served as a satisfactory political vehicle for the workers. Even the Lyttelton Times recognised that the Liberal Party had become more conservative; commenting on the Trades 'Councils' 1906 conference, an editorial said that 'the small farmers and the country party have largely captured the Liberal Party' despite Seddon's 'earnest loyalty to the workers'.^{49.} In June the Times conceded that a workers' party may have become necessary 'in order to secure recognition of their views', but 'we would not have that development regarded as inevitable'. As a consequence of Seddon's death, the Times warned, land-owners would try to capture the Liberal Party 'and, if they succeed, the name that has been associated with compulsory land purchase, graduated taxation,...and popular principles generally will be used to cover just those iniquities of class rule and aristocratic administration which oppressed the colony in the late eighties. We want to see the Liberal Party saved from that degradation, and only the workers of the colony can save it'.^{50.} This was an accurate summary of the process to which the Liberal Party fell victim, but it was a process that began long before Seddon died;

48. LT 15 Dec 1905, 4, 5; 8 Mar 1906, 7.

49. LT 16 Apr 1906, 6.

50. LT 19 June 1906, 6.

his death was only a factor in eroding the party's credibility among the workers.

After the 1905 election, the Political Labour League concentrated on municipal affairs and on increasing its membership. Early in 1906 the League planned co-operation with the Trades Council in selecting candidates for the Tramway Board to replace the incumbents who 'had made as big a bungle of its work as was possible'.⁵¹ It was recognised that the PLL and the Council had to improve their relationship; tied by the Liberals, the TLC had given little support to the League.⁵² A meeting of unions was called and resulted in a joint PLL - Trades Council ticket for the Tramway Board. The Council and League also began to collaborate on making proposals to strengthen local industries.⁵³ There were signs, too, that the PLL in Christchurch was becoming a little more assertive; at the annual conference the Christchurch branch successfully moved for the inclusion of a clause in the constitution calling for the 'collective ownership and control by the people of the land and other means of livelihood'.⁵⁴ The PLL and the Trades Council's candidates for the Tramway Board were all unsuccessful, except for John Barr. The list had ranged across the spectrum from Jimmy Thorn to Harry Ell; this was a tactical alliance only and did not point to a reconciliation between Liberals and socialists.⁵⁵

After the death of Seddon in June 1906, the Liberal union-

51. LT 2 Feb 1906, 5.

52. LT 3 Feb 1906, 9.

53. TLC Minutes 24 Mar 1906; LT 24 Mar 1906, 5.

54. LT 9 Apr 1906, 5; 4 May 1906, 6.

55. LT 4 May 1906, 6; 15 June 1906, 3.

ists in the Trades Council attempted to upstage the PLL. The organisation created for this purpose was the Workers' Political Association, founded 'to advance the social, economic, and political interests of the workers of New Zealand'. John Barr was the president; Henry Rusbridge, a carpenter who was one of Barr's chief allies in the Council, was a vice president, and Harry Ell was on the committee. The platform echoed those of the Trades Council and the New Liberals; the WPA intended to operate as a pressure-group within the Liberal Party.⁵⁶ There is some evidence that the moves to form the organisation came from within Liberal Party circles in Christchurch rather than trade unions; the Lyttelton Times seemed to know about the idea before it became public knowledge. The Times was clearly sympathetic, and gave Barr a 'Labour Column' which he ran for some years.

Mutual hostilities were conducted by the Political Labour League and the Workers' Political Association until both organisations dissolved around 1909. No figures of membership exist for the WPA; the Times never reported how many people attended its meetings, and it is likely to have been a small committee rather than a political party. Shortly after the WPA was founded, Dan Sullivan, a rising star in the Furniture Trades Union and the PLL, said that if John Barr was really opposed to the creation of a separate labour party he should join the Liberal Party,

comprised as it is of all sorts of capitalistic Liberals, bankers, merchants, farmers, and retail traders. But no...Mr Barr recognises that he would be taking on a Titanic task in trying to induce these gentry to assist him in legislating the wealth of the country out of their own hands and into the hands of the masses.⁵⁷

56. LT 23 June 1906, 2, 10.

57. LT 11 July 1906, 4.

The fights in the Trades Council were beginning to become public. Tom Paul of Dunedin opposed the WPA too.⁵⁸ In Christchurch the PLL printed and circulated 3000 copies of a manifesto denouncing the Workers' Political Association.⁵⁹ Later in the year the League made its soapbox meetings more regular 'with a view of placing before the public the principles of labour independence'.⁶⁰ The PLL also had an active social calendar through the year; at the end of 1906 a progressive enchre party was held to raise funds. An earlier intention to hold a smoke concert was reversed 'because it would exclude the lady members'.⁶¹

The Socialist Party engaged in similar propaganda and social activity to that of the League. It held a very crowded gathering in honour of May Day, the international workers' day, at which was preached 'international Socialism,...public ownership and democratic control of all means of life, securing to all the equal right to all the means of life, liberty, and happiness'.⁶² The Socialists regularly drew about forty people to their indoor meetings, at which speakers were heard as well business transacted. Fewer people attended the PLL's indoor meetings, which were usually preoccupied with organisation.

When the 1907 municipal elections came, the PLL was better organised than it had been the previous year. A number of affiliated unions were in favour of participating in the elections, and Dan Sullivan urged strong action to 'retire from office the

58. LT 27 June 1906, 3.

59. LT 27 July 1906, 7.

60. LT 24 Sept 1910, 6.

61. LT 1 Dec 1906, 10.

62. LT 2 May 1906, 6.

band of Rip van Winkles and incapables who at present direct, or rather misdirect, the affairs of the city'. He pointed to the growth of municipal enterprises all over Europe and claimed that Christchurch was 25 years behind.⁶³ The PLL combined with the Tailoresses', Metal Workers' Assistants', Plumbers', Moulders', Coachworkers', Bootmakers', Furniture Trades', Tinsmiths', and General Labourers' Unions, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers for the election and began enrolling votes.⁶⁴ Thorn and Sullivan were two of the four candidates for the City Council; their opening meeting in Cathedral Square attracted 'a considerable audience' and frequent applause.⁶⁵ Even John Barr acknowledged that the League candidates were the 'only ones bothering to do any campaigning'.⁶⁶ Perhaps impressed by this activity, the Iron and Brass Moulders' Union affiliated to the PLL in April 1907.⁶⁷ The election results, too, showed some advance; Sullivan missed a seat by only 30 votes in the Sydenham ward, although the other three all came near the bottom of the poll in the Central and St Albans wards.⁶⁸ One factor in the League's failure to do better was the exclusion from the roll of working-class voters who did not own property.

The Socialist Party took no direct part in municipal politics, but continued with educational work. Over 200 people attended a social on May Day 1907, where Freddy Bartram spoke on the necessity of women understanding and becoming involved in

63. LT 18 Jan 1907, 2.

64. LT 23 Jan 1907, 9; 11 Feb 1907, 4.

65. LT 1 Apr 1907, 9.

66. LT 6 Apr 1907, 4.

67. Minutes of Moulders Union 22 Mar 1907.

68. LT 25 Apr 1907, 7.

the struggle for socialism.⁶⁹ There was increasing collaboration between PLL and Socialist Party members; at the Socialists' May Day demonstration in the Square, Jack McCullough seconded a motion calling for the abolition of private ownership. Jimmy Thorn also spoke, telling the meeting that 'Liberalism has spoiled trades unionism. It has reduced the unions from strong, useful bodies to little coteries of officers who now and again conduct cases in the Arbitration Courts'.⁷⁰ Although this view was exaggerated, it did have some truth in it as an analysis of the ways in which an arbitration system could benefit employers.

Liberals were starting to get worried about the refusal of militant labour to disappear. For the first time the Lyttelton Times used the line that the agitators were foreigners: 'it was a most striking feature of the (May Day) gathering that a large proportion of the listeners were apparently New Zealanders by adoption only'.⁷¹ This ignored the fact that Thorn and Sullivan for instance, were born in Christchurch (Thorn was educated at the Establishment's Boys' High), while some Liberal unionists, like Barr and Rusbridge, were English. The Political Labour League was by now calling in its Cathedral Square meetings for a Labour Government independent of any other class.⁷² But Jack McCullough recognised that to

appeal to the workers was of little use now, nor would it be till a turn of depression came. All that could be done now was to instil into the public mind some of the ideas needed, that they might be applied when

69. LT 3 May 1907, 6.

70. LT 6 May 1907, 4.

71. Ibid, 6.

72. LT 4 June 1907, 9.

the time came.^{73.}

This was an exact analysis of the process by which the labour movement came to control the working-class electorates.

Jack McCullough's political activities threatened to cost him dearly. He had been employed as a tinsmith at the Addington Railway Workshops for many years and had been involved in the unions and in independent labour politics since before 1900. This had of course led him to oppose Government policies on many occasions, but it came as a shock when he was sacked in September 1907 under regulations forbidding civil servants to take part in political controversy.^{74.} As a consequence that had undoubtedly not been intended, McCullough's reputation among unionists was greatly enhanced, and he was elected Workers' Representative on the Arbitration Court at the end of 1907. The Government treated its friends in the union movement with generosity; in January 1907 John Barr and Tom Paul were appointed to the Legislative Council. By the end of the year Paul was calling for the Political Labour League to amalgamate with the Liberal Party. As Jimmy Thorn pointed out, Paul had reversed his position.^{75.}

The Political Labour League in Christchurch grew by over 200 members during 1907, and it got a further 70 through the efforts of an Australian women, Henrietta Powell, who worked as an organiser in early 1908.^{76.} When the miners struck in Blackball, the League sympathised with 'their determined opposition to the

73. LT 6 May 1907, 4, 6.

74. LT 26 Sept 1907, 6.

75. LT 24 Dec 1907, 5.

76. LT 24 Feb 1908, 8; 7 Mar 1908, 8; 12 Mar 1908, 3.

action of the company in victimising several prominent Socialists'. The Socialist Party expressed similar views; both parties organised financial assistance including collections at factory gates.⁷⁷ The Socialist Party organised a public meeting in support of the strikers; this filled the Opera House. Thorn moved the resolution of hearty sympathy and approval, which was carried with one dissenter.⁷⁸ Wholehearted support for arbitration was declining, if indeed it had ever existed. John Barr had little to say about the strike; the Workers' Political Association proposed later in the year that the Arbitration Act should become 'more stringent in the prevention of strikes and lockouts'.⁷⁹

Both the PLL and the Socialist Party moved early in 1908 to organise themselves for the General Election at the end of the year. The Socialists nominated Fred Cooke and Robert Eckroyd in March,⁸⁰ and the League selected Dan Sullivan for Avon and Jimmy Thorn for Christchurch South. Activity began in June, when the Prime Minister, Sir Joseph Ward, gave a political speech. The theatre was crowded and rowdy; Thorn and his comrades were in the front row and led a steady stream of interjections: 'Socialism's coming, Joe!'; 'Send Socialists to Parliament!'; and 'What about Jack McCullough?' Henry Rusbridge, a Liberal, moved a resolution of thanks and unabated confidence in Ward; Cooke and Thorn challenged this to 'cheers, groans, and laughter'. The Lyttelton Times reported that the motion was carried by an

77. LT 5 Mar 1908, 7; 7 Mar 1908, 10; 11 Mar 1908, 6.

78. LT 23 Mar 1908, 8.

79. LT 20 Aug 1908, 5.

80. LT 6 Mar 1908, 7.

overwhelming majority, but this was disputed by a correspondent.^{81.} The Socialists crowded their hall out when the English socialist and union leader Tom Mann addressed a meeting in reply to Ward. A large PLL meeting in the Square also expressed its lack of confidence in the Government.^{82.} The League campaigned against the arbitration system as well; when the Arbitration Court denied the farm labourers an award, Sullivan told a protest meeting that 'Arbitration Courts were part and parcel of the capitalist system....The workers must never rest until they had abolished the capitalistic system, and that could only be done by class conscious political action'.^{83.} There was also strong protest at the Government's amendments to the Arbitration Act, which increased penalties for strikes and in other ways aided the employers. Workplace issues were inseparable from parliamentary politics.

Radical Liberals again dominated the election in Christchurch. William Tanner and George Laurenson both faced challenges from other Liberals; Dr Henry Thacker stood against Laurenson in Lyttelton, and George Russell opposed Tanner in Avon. In Christchurch East, Thomas Davey was opposed by James McCombs who stood as an Independent. McCombs, a prominent prohibitionist, had been active in the Progressive Liberal Association and had organised campaigns for Ell and for Tommy Taylor.^{84.} Taylor was trying to get back into Parliament for Christchurch North. The Liberals all campaigned on platforms of further constitutional and social

81. LT 9 June, 7; 11 June 1908, 5.

82. LT 10 June 1908, 8; 15 June 1908, 9.

83. LT 24 Aug 1908, 8.

84. Gustafson, 160.

reform, much as in 1905. Russell expressed the view that Parliament existed to mediate between employers and workers; he rejected Socialism, which he defined as full nationalisation.⁸⁵ Perhaps unwisely, Tanner continued to campaign on the Government's record, stating that progress in 'land, labour, and State enterprise' had continued under Ward.⁸⁶ Laurenson advocated nationalisation of monopolies.⁸⁷ McCombs' platform was more radical than that of the Liberals, but he did not identify himself with Labour. He proposed to drive Liberal advocates of freehold land into the Opposition, abolish the sale of Crown Land, and settle workers on the land. He also supported a compulsory minimum wage and compulsory preference to unionists.⁸⁸

The PLL and the Socialist Party co-operated in the campaign; they were substantially more radical in platform in 1908 than in 1905.⁸⁹ Like others, their candidates spoke in halls and on street corners; Thorn also did a considerable amount of factory speaking. None of the four candidates indicated that they would consider voting for Ward's administration on a matter of confidence; Eckroyd said he would vote against it.⁹⁰ As they had in 1905, the candidates faced some opposition from certain prominent trade unionists; a manifesto appeared in mid-November extolling the radical virtues of the 'Liberal-Labour Government'. It was signed by seven union presidents, including Alfred Hart of the Painters, who was also president of the Trades Council; Rowland T. Bailey of the Aerated Water Workers; Henry Rusbridge of the

85. LT 16 Oct 1908, 8.

86. LT 21 Oct 1908, 7.

87. LT 24 Oct 1908, 9.

88. LT 31 Oct 1908, 10.

89. LT 5 Oct 1908, 9; 10 Oct 1908, 10.

90. LT 21 Oct 1908, 8.

Canterbury Carpenters and Joiners; John Read of Sullivan's Furniture Trade Union; and the presidents of the Coachworkers', Typographical, Butchers', and Quarrymen's Unions.⁹¹ There were also accusations that unions supporting the PLL had resolved to do so at irregular meetings attended by a small minority.⁹² In one case at least this was refuted; the Metal Workers' Assistants resolved to support the Socialist and Labour candidates at a meeting so crowded that not all who wished to could get in.⁹³

The second ballot was used in 1908, to provide a runoff between the two highest scoring candidates in electorates where no one took an absolute majority. The results of the first ballot showed a great improvement for independent labour compared to 1905. Thorn doubled his vote in Christchurch South, with 2221, but Ell again took an absolute majority with 3480. Again Thorn did the best of the candidates; Sullivan in Avon got 679 (six times the 1905 figure), but Tanner and Russell were nearly even with 2162 and 2185 respectively. Cooke took 504 in Christchurch East, five times better than he did in 1905, but McCombs received 1851 votes; many of these may well have come from New Liberals of 1905. Davey won with 3476, markedly better than he had done in 1905. Eckroyd gained 356 votes in Christchurch North, but Taylor stormed to victory with 4338 votes, 1600 ahead of the third candidate. In Lyttelton, Laurenson easily beat the flamboyant Thacker, 3646 to 2778.⁹⁴ Tanner was beaten in the second ballot. The final results gave the Government 46 seats and the Opposition 25, with four Independents, including the PLL's David

91. LT 14 Nov 1908, 4.

92. LT 12 Nov 1908, 5.

93. LT 13 Nov 1908, 3.

94. LT 18 Nov 1908, 9.

McLaren in Wellington East, and Tommy Taylor. Overall the PLL and Socialist candidates won 12% of the vote in the seats they fought; in Christchurch they got 13%.⁹⁵ Labour's position had improved, but the radical Liberals remained entrenched in Christchurch. Many workers had begun to experience hardship from inadequate wages or insecure employment by 1908; an economic downturn was beginning. Employers had become more aggressive and the Government more openly allied to their cause. These factors account for the rise in support gained by the League and Socialist candidates, but the process was not far enough advanced for the radical Liberals to be displaced.

The 1908 election was something of a landmark in one respect; it would be another four years before the same degree of unity existed in the socialist labour movement. The Political Labour League and the Socialist Party co-operated closely in Christchurch; both espoused collective ownership of the means of production. This is in contrast to the situation elsewhere; in other towns the League 'was becoming indistinguishable from the left wing of the Liberal Party'.⁹⁶ Possibly the greater radicalism of the Christchurch Liberals provoked a greater radicalism from the PLL in turn; but this explanation on its own is not satisfactory. Christchurch was one of the most industrialised centres in New Zealand by 1905, not only in areas like textiles and footwear and the processing of agricultural produce, but also in metal industries. Christchurch workers thus strongly experienced the employers' offensive for control of the workplace, an offensive which began

95. Gustafson, 19; Press, 18 Nov 1908, 10-11.

96. Roth, SP, 56. The poor references in Roth's article make it particularly difficult to know on what he bases this judgement.

in its current phase in the boot trade in the late 1890s and was going strong in the metal trades by 1908.⁹⁷ Thorn and McCullough were skilled metalworkers, and Fred Cooke was a tailor, another trade with high levels of skill vulnerable to new labour processes.

The promise of 1908 was quickly dissipated in internecine warfare which began at the end of the year and continued until 1913. Just after the election, the PLL lost its secretary, Ted Howard, a labourer of very militant views, who resigned after a dispute with Jimmy Thorn.⁹⁸ Dan Sullivan later suggested that Howard had resigned in a fit of temper after not being selected for the Avon seat, but the League's minutes do not bear this out; Howard offered to stand for Avon only if a better candidate could not be found, and when Howard first offered his resignation he agreed to defer it until after the election. The League's fortunes were not helped by the flight of the Treasurer with £13, all the funds.⁹⁹ The election cost the Christchurch PLL £110, and by December 1908 they were still £15 down, despite extensive support from Jack McCullough's own purse.¹⁰⁰ The League continued in existence until February 1909 when a meeting for 'important business' was called.¹⁰¹ No further record of the PLL in Christchurch exists; Thorn and Howard went and joined the Socialist Party, as did Sullivan for a time.¹⁰² For some months the Social-

97. See above pp64-7.

98. LT 27 Nov 1908, 3; Gustafson, 19. Unfortunately the relevant papers in the E J Howard Collection have been lost so I do not know what the fight was about.

99. PLL Minutes 15 Apr, 19 Aug 1908, 3 Sept 1908.

100. LT 4 Dec 1908, 9. J. A. McCullough, letter to R. Breen 1 Dec 1908.

101. LT 2 Feb 1909, 1. The notice advertising this meeting and its 'important business' is the last record I could find of the League.

102. Gustafson, 19; LT 19 Apr 1909, 6; LT 3 Jan 1911, 3.

ist Party was the only independent labour group in the city.

Political activity was at a rather low ebb in Christchurch during 1909, although the Socialist Party continued its propaganda and social activities, the former being done largely by the Cycle Scouts, who distributed literature and organised open-air meetings.¹⁰³ Generally, it was as though there was widespread recognition of the need for continued independent political action, but an equal uncertainty as to how to do it. The major activity was to do with militarism, and was provoked by the Government's donation of a battleship to Great Britain. The widespread involvement of labour organisations in anti-militarism campaigns indicates a political concern that in some ways went far beyond the workplace.

The Dreadnought cost the country £2 million, which was borrowed. Ward, in announcing the gift, claimed that there was no doubt that

Britain feels her supremacy on the seas is now seriously threatened by the amazing naval activity of the German dockyards. It appears clear that all thoughtful men in Great Britain recognise that the Empire must set itself with the utmost determination...to maintain the naval supremacy upon which not only our honour but our national greatness depends.¹⁰⁴

Radical politicians and labour activists reacted immediately, although criticism of the Government took two separate forms. Tommy Taylor, for instance, dwelt heavily on the constitutional aspects, saying that Parliament had been 'grossly insulted' by Cabinet's unilateral decision. Harry Ell was likewise unimpressed,

103. LT 19 Apr 1909, 6.

104. LT 23 Mar 1909, 7.

but some radical Liberals, like Davey and Laurenson, actually supported the Government.¹⁰⁵ The Trades Council president, Alfred Hart, called the gift a 'delirious farce....Sir Joseph Ward had, of late, been taking particular pains to voice the urgent necessity of retrenchment, and had indeed, practically demonstrated his intentions in this direction by starting with the workers'. Many had been laid off at the Addington Workshops. Hart believed that the money should have been used for domestic reform and economic development.¹⁰⁶ James Thorn made an outright attack on militarism in all its forms. In a letter to the Times he said:

We ought to be ashamed of ourselves....We ought to hang our heads for that poltroonery in us which permits a Cabinet of jingoes without consulting us to pawn our country to play the Imperial game. We ought to be ashamed and sorry that while our Government refuses aid to the starving children of the Old Country...it blatantly proposes to throw £2 000 000 to the god of war. On the ground of financial necessity, this Cabinet of wasteful squanderers dismisses scores of men from public works and shops...and then glibly and heartlessly proclaim their intention to put the people in bonds to build an engine of destruction! The inhumanity, the brutal inhumanity!....I should like to know what the ordinary German has done to have developed in us this spirit of disgusting bombast. Can any of the workers here...tell me any one sound reason why we should hate the Germans? The Germans are men and women, just as we are. They love, laugh, sing, get sad, just as we do. Have they done us any injury? Have they? If not, what justification is there to lust for their lives?¹⁰⁷.

Thorn also addressed an open letter to all ministers of religion in the city, pointing out the absolute incompatibility of militarism with the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. His efforts were largely in vain; the two bishops, Churchill Julius and John Joseph Grimes, enthusiastically supported Ward.¹⁰⁸ Among the

105. LT 23 Mar 1909, 7; 1 Apr, 8.

106. LT 24 Mar 1909, 7.

107. LT 24 Mar 1909, 8.

108. LT 29 Mar 1909, 7.

few congregations which took a stand against militarism were the Quakers and the Oxford Terrace Baptist Church.

Protest meetings were held; a very large Sunday afternoon meeting in the Square carried with one dissenter a demand that Ward devote 'his entire attention to much needed social improvements rather than to the construction of anti-social ships of war'.¹⁰⁹ A further meeting crowded out His Majesty's Theatre, although about 40% of the people inside, and 2000 people outside, supported the Government. The meeting was chaired by Jack McCullough and addressed by Tommy Taylor, Alfred Hart, and Dan Sullivan. Patriotic and other songs were directed at the speakers, as well as kazoos and recommendations that Sullivan get a haircut.¹¹⁰ The Navy League organised a mass meeting in support of the ship. This meeting drew 4000 people to the King Edward Barracks and broke up in disorder. As well as principled opponents of the Government, the Lyttelton Times reported that 'many of the larrikins who participated in the row...voted every way and all ways, cheered every person who attempted to speak, and displayed an unbiased enthusiasm in the cause of riot that was as thorough as it was disinterested'. It was noted that the great majority of those present were men, which differed from the earlier opposition meeting.¹¹¹ A pro-Government meeting held at Lyttelton on a Saturday night drew a large attendance of 'ladies', but this description excluded working-class women who in any case had the week's shopping to do. There were no sign of any working men either; even if they had supported the Government Saturday night

109. LT 30 Mar 1909, 7.

110. LT 7 Apr 1909, 7-8.

111. LT 15 Apr 1909, 7.

was for relaxing.^{112.}

The Dreadnought was closely linked with the introduction of compulsory military training. A week after the gift was announced, the Lyttelton Times observed that the people of the country were likely to 'look much more favourably upon the idea ...than they did a year or two ago'.^{113.} A campaign began to soften public opinion up for the introduction of conscription, including a speaking tour by Robert McNab, a former Minister of Defence, and he drew a full crowd to the Choral Hall and received prolonged cheering.^{114.} In June 1909 Ward took himself off to London for the Imperial Defence Conference, and by the end of the year compulsory military training had become law. Viscount Kitchener, a senior British General, visited in early 1910 to further impress the masses, and the port of Lyttelton was placed under war conditions while he was around.^{115.}

The labour movement strenuously opposed conscription until 1914, although, as with the Dreadnought, opposition was based on differing reasons. Some opposed all militarism as one of the oppressive outgrowths of capitalism; some opposed it on simple humanitarian grounds; others merely opposed compulsion. Nor were the Germans seen as the sole enemy; the Government skilfully exploited the widespread anti-Chinese feeling that existed. Indeed, Dan Sullivan's first reaction to McNab's speaking tour had been favourable: 'I want to see the defence of the country made effective....I am convinced that the day will come when it will

112. LT 19 Apr 1909, 7.

113. LT 1 Apr 1909, 6.

114. LT 7 May 1909, 6; 25 May 1909, 12.

115. LT 21 Feb 1910, 6, 7.

be necessary to resist the entry of the yellow man by force of arms'.¹¹⁶. The Political Labour League, indeed, had always favoured the exclusion of Chinese immigrants, and many unions recorded similar opinions. The only party which disagreed was the Socialist Party; on at least one occasion it heard a speaker 'deprecating the prevailing prejudice against so-called inferior races'.¹¹⁷. Most unions joined the Labour and Socialist Parties in vigorous opposition to conscription; until 1913 it was about all that the different wings of the labour movement could agree on.

II. The New Zealand Labour Party, 1909-1912

The Political Labour League had disintegrated by early 1909, but many unions felt that it was essential to keep an independent labour party going. In July 1909 the Canterbury Drivers' Union called a public meeting which was attended by about sixty people. It was unanimously resolved that

the time has arrived for the establishment of a political party to be called the New Zealand Labour Party, to organise all those persons, both within and without the trades union movement, who are in sympathy with and prepared to support the policy, aims, and objects of the Labour Movement.

The parliamentarians of the party would take office only in a Labour Ministry, and would not enter the Government of another party.¹¹⁸.

The first Christchurch branch of the new party was in

116. LT 7 June 1909, 4.

117. LT 21 Sept 1907, 9.

118. LT 17 Jul 1909, 2; H. Roth 'New Zealand's First Labour Party', 12.

Christchurch South; it remained closely associated with the Drivers' Union and its secretary, Hiram Hunter. A week after the party was formed in Christchurch, a meeting of unions in Auckland carried a similar resolution. For a time the new party associated itself with the campaigns of Alexander Hogg, a radical Liberal who had recently resigned as Minister of Labour.¹¹⁹

There were still some links with radical Liberalism, and these were to cause the NZLP some trouble.

The Canterbury Trades Council gave the NZLP an implicit blessing at the end of 1909 when it issued a strongly-worded political manifesto. In the middle of the year, socialists had won control of the Council and it was now firmly committed to independent labour politics. The manifesto was provoked by the Government's proposal to sell off Crown land that was leased to farmers; this struck at the heart of the radical Liberals' land policy. The Trades Council proclaimed 'that the present Liberal Government has, by its land proposals, undone the work of the main part of the last twenty years'. The Council believed that 'land is the first essential to existence, and we have seen in other countries that where its ownership is in few hands, the mass of the people can only use it upon the landlord's terms...a curse all down the centuries'.¹²⁰ Concentrated ownership of land also blocked the possibility of large numbers of workers living as semi-independent smallholders on land leased from the Government; many workers would have preferred this to living in the cities.¹²¹ In light of the Government's proposals, the Trades Council felt

119. Roth, 13.

120. TLC Minutes 11 Dec 1909.

121. See above, p40.

that those leasehold-supporters remaining in Parliament had to be backed to the utmost. 'We will go further', the Council declared, 'and state that the parting of the ways between Labour and Liberalism has come in no unmistakeable manner, and from this out, we stand by ourselves'.¹²².

The manifesto was signed by, among others, Alfred Hart, one of the Council's most respected members; a year earlier he had signed an election manifesto in support of the Liberals. A year of depression and high unemployment, with the Government becoming openly militaristic and pro-employer, must have affected the views of Hart and many other unionists. John Barr and Henry Rusbridge continued to oppose an independent labour party, and the Trades Council was forced to regret 'that...Messrs Barr and Rusbridge did not vote as directed by this Council, at the Conference on the remit of forming an independent Labour party in Parliament'.¹²³.

The New Zealand Labour Party was not established on a national basis until July 1910. In the months before July, the party did considerable work in Christchurch. Subscriptions were set in February 1910 at 2'6 per year for men and one shilling for women, in recognition of their lower incomes. A vigorous propaganda campaign was planned.¹²⁴. David McLaren, elected in 1908 as Labour MP for Wellington East, campaigned in Christchurch for some weeks, addressing meetings in factories and public halls. A meeting of 300 waterside workers at Lyttelton voted unanimously

122. TLC Minutes, 11 Dec 1909.

123. Ibid, 8 Jan 1910.

124. LT 14 Feb 1910, 7.

to form a branch of the party after hearing McLaren, but railway workers seemed less interested. Thirty attended a lunchtime meeting and gave him a polite hearing but made no resolution.¹²⁵ The railway workers were kept isolated from other workers' struggles by their relatively secure position, which was ensured by their private deal with the Government, outside the arbitration system.

Tommy Taylor took McLaren's place at one NZLP meeting in June 1910; Taylor was obviously sympathetic to the party and McLaren stated that Taylor regarded himself as being under contract to the electors of Christchurch North to remain as an Independent until the 1911 election, but intended to join the NZLP after that.¹²⁶ Taylor himself did not confirm or deny McLaren's statement, but that same month assisted the NZLP in a by-election in Auckland.¹²⁷ Twelve months later Taylor stated at a public meeting that he supported the party but had not yet signed the pledge. The Lyttelton Times suspected that he was too independent ever to totally align himself with a political party. There is no record that Taylor formally joined the party before his death in 1911.¹²⁸

By the end of June 1910 the NZLP had 250 members in its Christchurch South Branch and had also established branches in Christchurch East and Kaiapoi. The subscription for men was lowered to a shilling a year, presumably to attract more members.¹²⁹ The party was established on a national basis in July 1910 by the Trades Councils' annual conference, at which there was considerable

125. LT 19 Mar 1900, 10; 23 Mar 1900, 2.

126. LT 12 Mar 1910, 11; 22 June 1910, 6.

127. LT 20 June 1910, 7.

128. LT 7 Jul 1911, 9.

129. LT 28 May 1910, 10; 25 June 1910, 10.

disagreement over the form and policies the NZLP should adopt.

The vote to constitute the party was not unanimous; ten voted in favour, and six-all aligned with the Socialist Party - voted against. The minority, led by Ted Howard, wished to defer the matter until all Trades Councils had been fully consulted.¹³⁰ The only victory won by the radicals was on the party's Objective. The draft before the conference had as the first objective the promotion of a land policy of small leasehold farms. Dan Sullivan joined with Howard to have substituted:

To maintain upon our Statute Books all the progressive legislation that has already been enacted, and to insist upon its sympathetic and proper administration. To enact comprehensive measures, and establish such conditions as will foster and ensure equality of opportunity, also the moral material and educational advancement and the general comfort and well-being of the whole people, based upon the gradual Public Ownership of all the means of Production, Distribution, and Exchange.

Some Auckland delegates moved that 'gradual public ownership' be replaced by 'socialisation'. Sullivan felt that was too radical and likely to alienate sympathy, but Howard said that he could not understand a socialist objecting to socialisation. However, probably out of a desire for unity and a viable organisation, Howard voted with Sullivan and the majority.¹³¹ The Auckland Socialists objected to the gradualism of the objective and possibly also to the idea of total control of production by the state. Some years earlier, the Christchurch Socialist Party had campaigned against simple nationalisation on the grounds that it would merely replace private capitalists by the state.¹³² The NZLP adopted a platform of reforms, beginning with the immediate nationalisation of all 'monopolies' and the creation of competitive state factories

130. Evening Post 19 July 1910, in JTP 647/3.

131. Ibid.

132. See above, p162.

for the production of the necessities of life. On land reform, there was to be a ban on the further sale of Crown land, an increased tax on land values, and closer settlement - including the acquisition of further Maori land for this purpose. There would be a State bank with the sole right of note issue and an end to borrowing. Constitutional reforms were also proposed, including proportional representation, the initiative and referendum, the abolition of the Legislative Council, and universal suffrage for municipal bodies.¹³³ Taken as a whole, the platform was little different from that of some radical Liberals in 1905, and was less radical in some respects than that of the Christchurch PLL in 1908. Possibly the founders of the NZLP were already looking beyond the working class for votes and felt that sustained moderation and respectability were necessary. The moderation of the NZLP platform drew fierce criticism from Socialists and Red Feds.

The NZLP enjoyed a considerable growth in membership during the months after its formation, if its social gatherings are a reliable indicator. These were very large, drawing some hundreds of people.¹³⁴ The party was quickly endorsed by the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council, and the party platform received considerable publicity through the Council's official column in the Lyttelton Times. Many unions which would have opposed the NZLP had already seceded from the Trades Council. The Canterbury General Committee of the NZLP appointed as organiser Harry Campbell, who had worked as a navvy and agitator in railway works around the

133. JTP 982/61.

134. E.g. a progressive euchre and dancing got 240 people.
LT 23 Aug 1910, 6; also 18 Aug 1910, 6.

country. Campbell reported that

Wherever he had addressed meetings of workers he had found that there was an almost unanimous opinion that neither of the two existing political parties was of any use to the workers, and that their only chance lay in organising a strong Labour Party and returning men of their own class to Parliament.

The Party's membership in Christchurch and the nearby towns was close to 1000 by September 1910, two months after its formation as a national body.^{135.}

Campbell was sacked as organiser in November; his militant views almost certainly clashed with the more cautious line expressed by the NZLP's leaders in Christchurch.^{136.} Particularly, the dispute centred around a clause in the party's constitution that allowed any sitting member of Parliament who joined the NZLP to be renominated for his constituency without opposition. Campbell strongly believed that the party should have no dealings with ex-Liberals. He also objected to the party's allowing any person to become a member, whether they were trade unionists or not, and accused Hunter and Bob Whiting of having 'engineered (the two clauses) through the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council. These two gentlemen, with two confederates, who are also professional secretaries, cut and dry all matters in the Trades Hall before the workers are consulted.'^{137.} Hunter responded by attacking Campbell's integrity and motives, calling him a carpetbagger and claiming that he was only in the movement for personal gain.^{138.} The dispute reflected one that was emerging in the Trades Council. The majority faction, which included Hunter, Sullivan, and Jack

135. LT 16 Sept 1910, 4.

136. LT 28 Nov 1910, 8.

137. LT 3 Dec 1910, 6.

138. LT 6 Dec 1910, 3.

McCullough, wanted labour to lead a broad-based socialist party to enlist the support of other groups besides the workers. A minority, centred on the Shearers' Union, believed that this would lead to a dilution of radical purpose; they advocated a smaller party based on trade unions and open only to workers.^{139.}

The fight between Harry Campbell and the NZLP hierarchy was not an isolated incident. Signs of strain within the socialist labour movement were evident even before the NZLP was constituted. In March 1910 the Socialist Party met in Christchurch for its national conference, and held a public meeting in conjunction. Robert Hogg of Wellington, who had led the party some years earlier to reject any work for immediate reform as an obstacle to the proletarian revolution,^{140.} denounced the Arbitration Act as a class law made by a class government, and David McLaren as a 'Labour busybody' who could see much good in the Liberal Party.^{141.} Once firmly established on a national level, the NZLP spent much time decrying the methods advocated by the Socialist Party and the Red Federation of Labour. The essence of the Labour Party's position was that 'no union should be allowed to plunge a whole country into industrial chaos. If action is to be taken, it should only be taken after all affected have been consulted'; it maintained that the Federation advocated such uncoordinated, unplanned, and 'irresponsible' action.^{142.} This was

139. See Melanie Nolan, 'Jack McCullough', pp 99-100, 100-115.

140. Roth 'The New Zealand Socialist Party' 54-5.

141. LT 28 Mar 1910, 4. At that time McLaren was doing as much as anybody towards the establishment of the Labour Party, and was decidedly less friendly to the Liberals than, say, J. T. Paul. Later McLaren was to do his best to destroy the Waihi strike and the SDP-UFL, and after 1914 was to be found in Reform Party circles. Hogg became editor of Truth in 1913 (Gustafson, 158 & 161).

142. James Young in TLC Column, LT 24 Sept 1910, 13.

not true; the Red Federation's centralised organisation ensured just such consultation as the NZLP advocated, unless of course the Labour Party believed the employers should be consulted about a proposed strike as well. Red Federation unions that struck without the permission of the central organisation did so over specific workplace issues and not for wider 'political' goals. The NZLP dwelt at considerable length on the syndicalist tactic of a general strike of all workers to bring about the proletarian revolution, an ideal with which the Federation had some sympathy. The Labour Party claimed that such tactics could not be justified where universal suffrage existed.¹⁴³ The NZLP's position was much influenced by figures in the British Labour movement and by the German revisionist Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein, who did much to take his party away from Marxism. The Federation of Labour believed that 'At the bottom of the failure of these (Political Labour) Leagues is the fact that the workers were not educated or organised industrially' and that much closer industrial organisation would be necessary before universal suffrage would be of much use. Decisions of a socialist Government required a well-organised labour movement on the shop floor in order to be effective, or even made.¹⁴⁴

Vituperation and solid propaganda went hand in hand. The fight was conducted in public halls, on soapboxes, and through the columns of the Lyttelton Times. The militants concentrated much of their attack on the Arbitration system and the NZLP's support of it. Ted Howard, who became the militants' leading propagandist,

143. Ibid.

144. S. J. Roscoe, letter, LT 10 Dec 1910, 7.

believed that 'this Act has benefitted the employing class much more than the producing class' and he asked 'why should a carpenter, say, require more comfort or a higher standard of living than a hod-carrier? Or even the Judge of the Court, why should he be considered a higher form of being and demand a higher standard of living than the hod-carrier?'¹⁴⁵. Ted Howard was one of the fiercest critics of social injustice in the city before 1914:

The following are some of 'Life's Little Contrasts' that will speed the coming of the change. In the Supplementary Estimates occur the following items - Governor's House, Auckland, for furnishing and renovating, £2500. The Cass railway men are humbly begging for a bit of canvas to mend their tents....One thousand pounds for renovating soldiers' graves. Nothing to prevent little children at the Cass from getting an early grave. Two thousand pounds for the Premier's little picnic and official entertainment in London. How many 'little wooden huts' would that build for the Cass workers?¹⁴⁶.

At that time, members of Howard's General Labourers' Union had an award wage of £2 8 0 for a 48 hour week, and work was by no means guaranteed to last all week or to come every week.

Dan Sullivan became Howard's chief antagonist. He acknowledged that the 'revolutionary Socialist movement...stands for a great principle, but is altogether too theoretical and impractical ever to appeal to the British mind'. As for the industrial unionists, Sullivan charged that they were

either affected with rebusosity of mind, or are attempting to gain adherents by deliberate deception....I believe that industrial unionism is fraught with tremendous possibilities of evil to the cause of labour ...start out to overturn the capitalist system by the use of physical strength, and the employers will retaliate with a similar weapon,

the use of state force, army and police, and the control of food

145. LT 7 Dec 1910, 5.

146. LT 9 Dec 1910, 9.

to starve the workers into submission. 'The only hope for the workers is the intelligent use of the ballot-box'.¹⁴⁷.

Howard responded with vigour:

Mr Sullivan says the Labour Party are out to secure to the worker the full social value of his labour by means of the collective ownership of land and capital. Now, that is revolutionary Socialism, and if they stand for that, why not be honest and say so...?

In fact, Howard said, the socialisation question was fought and lost at the conference that established the NZLP, 'so how can he say that this new party stands for that?' Moreover, Howard said, the Red Federation constitution made no reference to the general strike at all. In his own opinion a workers' socialist offensive would be fought by capital whether it took the form of a parliamentary victory or a general strike, and the same methods would be used in either case. Howard also implied that Sullivan had been less than consistent in his political activities, having joined the Socialist Party after the PLL collapsed but deserting it as soon as the NZLP was formed.¹⁴⁸.

Sullivan's reply did little to raise the tone of debate; he accused Howard of having a 'perverted character of ...mind' and of having practiced the grossest opportunism, deserting the PLL in its hour of need in the 1908 election because he was not selected as a candidate. This was simply not true. Sullivan agreed that he had joined the Socialist Party 'and would probably under similar circumstances do the same thing if forced to choose between the Liberal Party and the Socialist Party'. But he had always advocated 'a labour policy' as the means to achieve social-

147. LT 24 Dec 1910, 6.

148. LT 31 Dec 1910, 7.

ism, and had resigned from the Socialist Party when he could not persuade it to accept the NZLP platform. On the argument between socialisation and public ownership, Sullivan stated that the meaning of the former

has now degenerated into something very close to anarchy: the repudiation of the state and the supreme control of production by independent groups. In its latter meaning it was rejected by the conference, and the real socialist ideal, public ownership with democratic control, substituted.¹⁴⁹

The problem with this definition of socialism is that it equates democratic control simply with the liberal democratic state, where the exercise of such control on the part of the masses is confined to voting in elections. Radicals like Howard suspected that this was not enough.

The conflict was not confined to duels between the big guns of the movement. One anonymous correspondent complained that 'the Top Dogs are probably enjoying the fight between the bottom dogs, with the knowledge that their skins will probably remain whole during the continuance of the conflict'.¹⁵⁰ W. Kilgour, a local Red Fed, defined the general strike as a mass sit-in once the workers' One Big Union was strong enough to take over the country, rather than a walk-out with the risk of being starved back. This understanding was drawn from the American syndicalist W. E. Trautmann.¹⁵¹ In reply a 'Navy' wondered if Kilgour thought that the employers,

like little children, will meekly obey? And if they refuse, what is going to happen? The workers won't strike or go to the Arbitration Court, so I suppose that despite their bombastic proclamations the workers will have to accept the inevitable. Sincerely hoping that the methods of level-headed men like Mr. Sullivan will prevail in the

149. LT 3 Jan 1911, 3; and PLL Minutes for 1908.

150. LT 23 Dec 1910, 4.

151. LT 4 Jan 1911, 7.

councils of labour, I am, etc.¹⁵².

Sullivan's advocacy of State-owned industries was criticised by one 'Rolling Stone':

An oasis of State-owned industries could not flourish in a desert of capitalism. If Mr. Sullivan will pay a visit to our State coal mines and co-operative works he will soon learn that a man can be oppressed under State Socialism administered by a capitalistic Government, and he would pause before committing the workers to the authority of official bureaucrats whom I would not trust to see a mule properly shod.¹⁵³.

Sometimes there were calls for unity from both sides of the divide. Mick Laracy of the Shearers' Union and Red Federation called for one great federation of labour and one political party 'to which we can all subscribe', thereby prefiguring the Unity movement of 1913.¹⁵⁴ Laracy was supported by Alfred Hart, but Hart suggested (in marked contrast to his attitudes of two years previously) that all the Christchurch organisations should join the Red Federation of Labour.¹⁵⁵.

In municipal politics the labour movement had notable, if short-lived, success in 1911. The Labour Party and a number of unions formed a Municipal Election Council which nominated a number of labour candidates for the City Council: the Drivers' and General Labourers' Unions had major disputes with the Council over recognition and wages. The labour front strongly endorsed Tommy Taylor as mayoral candidate. The chairman of the Election Council, Bob Whiting, presided at Taylor's campaign opening in a crowded theatre; other Labour candidates were on the platform

152. LT 5 Jan 1911, 8.

153. LT 6 Mar 1911, 10.

154. LT 19 Jun 1911, 9.

155. LT 23 Jan 1911, 8.

and heard Taylor praise their 'ability, integrity, and zeal for the city's interests'. Taylor's own platform included the prompt asphaltting of roads to deal with the dust nuisance, a minimum wage of 1s 1½d per hour to all Council employees, the improvement of the milk supply, a municipal food market, and repeal of bylaws which prohibited public speaking in Cathedral Square.¹⁵⁶ The Trades Council welcomed the attempt of the sitting Mayor, Charles Allison, to pick a fight with the unions, and stated that 'The whole trouble has been caused by the Council's abhorrence of organised labour, which has been amply demonstrated again and again'.¹⁵⁷

The Municipal Corporations Act had recently extended the franchise to all residents; the old property qualification was gone and the roll was increased by almost half.¹⁵⁸ The labour organisations mounted a massive campaign to get the vote out, and their efforts paid off. Taylor was elected Mayor of Christchurch with 7401 votes to 4898 for Dr Henry Thacker and 3698 for Allison. William Smith was returned from the Linwood ward for Labour, and the party cleaned up the Sydenham ward by an overwhelming majority. Hiram Hunter, Alfred Hart, Fred Burgoyne and William Millar took the four seats. An 'enormous and decidedly pro-labour crowd' watched the results come in; many of the people had come from Sydenham by tram. They made their feelings plain when Allison spoke; Taylor praised the Labour Party for having 'stirred up the apathy of years past'.¹⁵⁹ Bob Whiting topped the poll in Spreydon for the Borough Council.¹⁶⁰

156. LT 24 Mar 1911, 9.

157. LT 22 Apr 1911, 12; see above, pp 10-92.

158. Scotter, 263.

159. LT 27 Apr 1911, 7, 8.

160. LT 22 Apr 1911, 8.

At his installation as Mayor, Taylor said that the Labour councillors were 'a leaven which might in time leaven the whole lump, but that would happen only if the new councillors were sweetly reasonable in their attitude and earnest on behalf of the affairs of the city'.¹⁶¹ Unfortunately for the Mayor's hopes, the conservatives still controlled the Council and in a stormy meeting rejected the agreement reached between the Works Committee and the Drivers' Union for a 50 hour week at 1s 1½d per hour. Taylor voted with the Labour minority.¹⁶² Taylor's own plans to improve the roads were scuttled when a ratepayers' poll refused to approve the necessary loans.¹⁶³ Four months after his election, Taylor was dead at the age of 49 of peritonitis from an ulcer. The entire city shared in the grief and shock; the Labour councillors were among the pallbearers, and the Red Federation eulogised him as 'one of those fearless souls whose voice was ever on the side of justice'.¹⁶⁴ The City Council elected the anti-Labour J. J. Dougall to the Mayoralty, and a conservative won the vacancy on the Council.¹⁶⁵

Compulsory military training was put into effect during 1911; opposition to this was almost the only issue on which all sections of the labour movement could agree. Compulsory registration was announced at the end of March; the Government intended to have all eligible men register and only then deal with exemptions on grounds of conscience; in otherwords, conscientious objection was not granted as a right but conceded as a privilege, and only to

161. LT 4 May 1911, 8.

162. LT 11 July 1911, 10.

163. Scotter, 263-4.

164. LT 31 Jul 1911, 7; MW 4 Aug 1911, 8.

165. LT 25 Aug 1911, 8.

those who belonged to a church which specifically opposed military service.¹⁶⁶ Even before the imposition of registration, an Anti-Militarist League had been formed, in May 1910. The League was strongly religious in orientation; its founder was Louis Christie, editor of the Christian Herald. The intention of the League was to educate public opinion to the point where the suspension or abolition of the Act could be forced.¹⁶⁷ Protest against the system after it had been established was no co-ordinated until late in May 1911, when the Baptist Lay-Preachers' Association and the Church Ministers' Association called for passive resistance and, with the Christchurch Socialist Party, the Canterbury Trades Council, and some unions, formed the National Peace Council.¹⁶⁸ The first public protest meeting, called by the Baptists, was disrupted by students from the University College.¹⁶⁹ Compulsory military training was not instantly popular; according to one of its opponents in June 1911. 13000 eligible youths throughout the country had refused to register. At least 1000 of these were in Christchurch.¹⁷⁰ The National Peace Council and the Anti-Militarist League merged to co-ordinate further opposition to the system; Louis Christie became the Council's secretary and the treasurer was Charles Mackie, a Baptist.¹⁷¹

Prosecutions for resistance began in July; Edwin Hannan, a carpenter, and Harry Cooke, a tailor like his father Fred Cooke, were fined ten shillings and forty shillings respectively for fail-

166. LT 31 Mar 1911, 4.

167. Weitzel, 129-30.

168. Weitzel, 130; LT 27 May 1911, 10.

169. Weitzel, 130; LT 10 June 1911, 3.

170. Letter, S. J. Roscoe, LT 13 July 1911, 8.

171. LT 14 Jul 1911, 3; Plumridge, 77, 'Labour in Christchurch'.

ing to register. Harry Cooke wore a red tie to court, which cost him the extra thirty shillings. The Lyttelton Times treated the defendants with patronising ridicule.¹⁷² Christchurch unions began to record their opposition to conscription, and in September 1911 the Trades Council affiliated to the National Peace and Anti-Militarism Council.¹⁷³ Many people protested against the system to the Lyttelton Times. 'A Mother's Call' wrote soon after registration was decreed:

"The hand that rocks the cradle moves the world" say our national leaders when cajoling parents to increase the birth-rate. Yet when I see my sons sign for compulsory military training I shall wish that I had left them unborn.¹⁷⁴

The passive resisters carried their campaign to the limit, electing to go to jail rather than pay the fines. Harry Cooke was the first to be jailed, drawing 21 days. 'A large body of his Socialist admirers, under Comrade Howard...gathered at the station' to farewell him. 'As the train steamed out, lusty cheers were given for Harry, and lusty groans for Sir Joseph Ward'.¹⁷⁵ Supporters of conscription stormed a large public meeting held by the Peace Council in August; students were again prominent in the rioting. Having failed to defeat the meeting's resolution, the rioters proceeded down to Socialist Hall and continued the noise and window-breaking under the benign eye of the police.¹⁷⁶ By September the Government had apparently decided to refrain from further prosecutions until after the election at the end of the year.¹⁷⁷

172. LT 19 Jul 1911, 7.

173. LT 22 Jul 1911, 9; GLU Minutes 17 Oct 1911; TLC Mins. 15 Sept 1911.

174. LT 12 May 1911, 4.

175. LT 12 Aug 1911, 5.

176. LT 22 Aug 1911, 8.

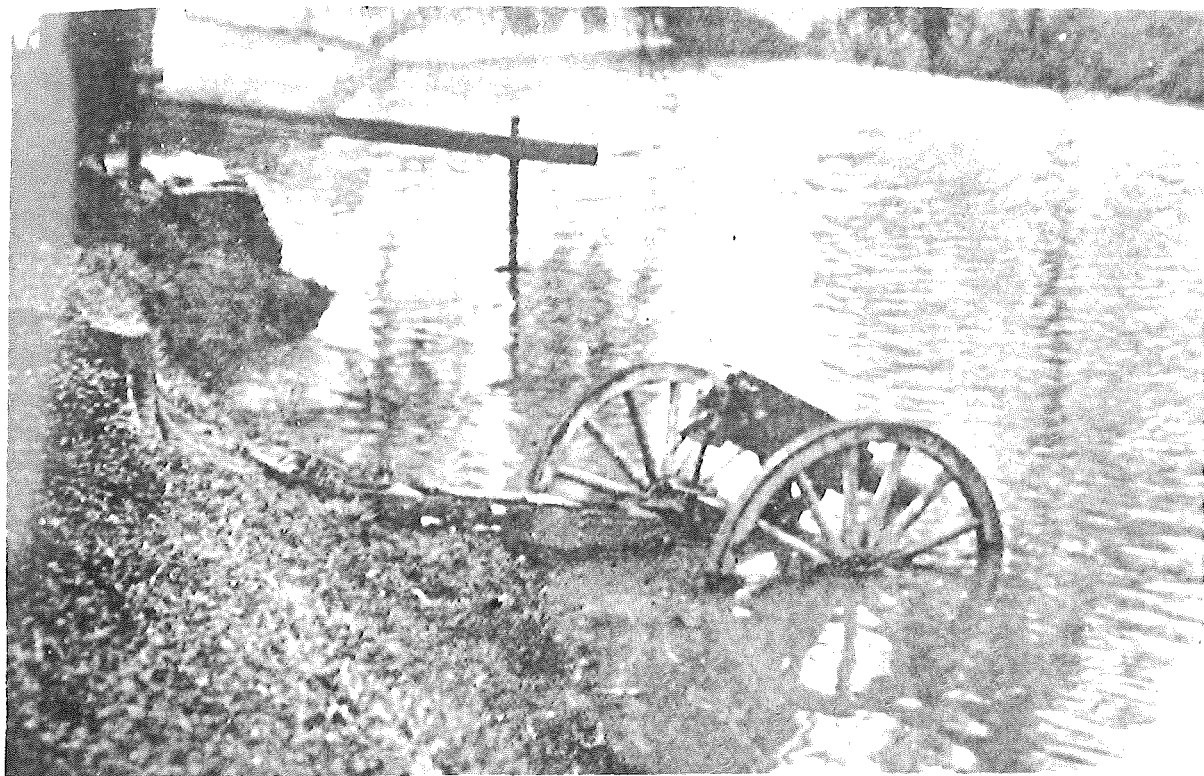
177. Alleged by Christie, LT 1 Sept 1911, 2.

Resistance to conscription was determined throughout 1911-1914. In September 1912 anti-conscriptionists took this captured South African gun and rolled it into the Avon. Respectable Liberals were outraged.

- Canterbury Times 11 Sept 1912,

The Great Strike, 1913: the Christchurch Strike Committee outside Socialist Hall. Includes Fred Cooke (back row, 1st left); James Thorn (second row, 3rd left); and Ted Howard (front row, 3 left); and Dan Sullivan and James McCombs (second row, 8 and 9 left).

- Hocken Library, JT Paul Papers.



The Labour Party's efforts in the General Election were co-ordinated by the American propagandist 'Professor' Walter Thomas Mills. He was brought to New Zealand by the Labour Party but was at first welcomed by all factions on the strength of his international reputation. Originally contracted to do a simple lecturing tour, Mills provided the NZLP with a stream of propaganda in support of its gradualist position; 'with promiscuous enthusiasm Mills wooed Single Taxers, Prohibitionists, women, and Christians'.¹⁷⁸ It was his continued advocacy of gradual, Parliamentary methods that initially caused the Socialist Party and the Red Federation to become disenchanted with Mills. Although he billed himself as a socialist, Mills seemed to have no concept of class struggle. In a pamphlet inspired by him, the NZLP addressed itself to 'the Useful People of New Zealand', one of Mills' pet phrases, and claimed that land reform was the most important social issue. More incredibly, the party advanced this view not because it regarded private landowning as a keystone to capitalism, but because it felt that 'the use of land is practically the only opportunity the man of small means has whereby he shall not have to labour directly under the rule of others'.¹⁷⁹ There was no suggestion of the abolition of the wage system, merely a statement that the 'man of small means' should be able to rise out of the wage-earning class. (It said nothing about those of no means.) But Mills was able to draw the crowds, and was instrumental in establishing or strengthening Labour Party branches. By October he was also devoting much time to an alternative proposal of industrial unity to the Red Federation.¹⁸⁰

178. Olssen 'W. T. Mills....' NZJH, 116.

179. NZLP pamphlet, 1911, in JTP 982/26.

180. See above, pp 144-50.

The Labour Party contested four electorates in Christchurch. William Smith stood in Avon, Hiram Hunter in Christchurch East, Dan Sullivan in Riccarton, and Bob Whiting in Christchurch South. They opposed two Socialists: Fred Cooke in Christchurch East, and Ted Howard in Christchurch South. This drew Ted Howard's ire; he believed that since the Socialist Party had got in first in those two electorates, it should be allowed a clear run. He described the Labour Party as 'a party that springs up just before every general election for the purpose of defeating the Socialist from getting power', and claimed that the NZLP never committed itself on an issue until it knew public opinion. He cited the issue of conscription as an example, and there was some truth in the claim.¹⁸¹ James McCombs stood in Avon as an Independent Labour candidate; he differed from the NZLP only on the liquor question, being an outright prohibitionist.¹⁸² The NZLP campaign stressed opposition to conscription, the reform of the arbitration system, nationalisation of monopolies, increased income tax, a Right to Work Act, and no further sale of Crown land.¹⁸³ The Liberals again campaigned on their Government's record. Neither Russell or Witty opposed the Government's land policy or conscription. George Laurenson advocated a Right to Work Act and an end to the sale of Crown land, and he and Leonard Isitt, who had succeeded Tommy Taylor in Christchurch North, opposed conscription.¹

Labour's campaign must have been somewhat undermined when James Young, the writer of the Trades Council's column in the Lyttelton Times, stated that 'the Ward Administration has been a

181. LT 15 Sept 1911, 3.

182. LT 7 Dec 1911, 8.

183. LT 1 Nov 1911, 9.

184. LT 4 Nov 1911, 10; 14 Nov 1911, 8; 15 Nov 1911, 10.

good friend' of the workers.¹⁸⁵ Young's days were numbered after he wrote that and also publicly endorsed conscription; he claimed that he had been misunderstood.¹⁸⁶ He was speedily replaced by Dan Sullivan, who did not usually try to deny that the labour movement was a class movement.

Labour made major gains in some areas. In Christchurch East, Hunter took 2315 votes, only 42 behind Thomas Davey. Dr. Thacker, standing as an Independent Liberal, topped the poll with 2462 votes. Fred Cooke took 408, a hundred down on 1908. In Christchurch South, Harry Ell managed a first-ballot victory but was less than 600 ahead of Bob Whiting. Ted Howard took 535 votes; together, he and Whiting added 1500 onto Jimmy Thorn's 1908 total. In Avon, William Smith polled a poor 802 votes, but it was still better than Sullivan had done in 1908. Jimmy McCombs took most of the 'labour' votes; he got 2787 to Russell's 2999. McCombs must have inherited almost all of William Tanner's old supporters, and he was the only labour candidate to get to a second ballot in Christchurch; he finished then only 300 behind Russell. Dan Sullivan did less well in Riccarton; it was not his territory and was still semi-rural. He took 1501 votes, half Witty's figure and 500 behind the Reform candidate. George Laurenson, who never had any labour opposition in Lyttelton, beat his sole opponent by two to one.¹⁸⁷ Four labour MPs were elected, all from the North Island.

The radical Liberals had held on in Christchurch, but indep-

185. LT 25 Nov 1911, 12.

186. LT 2 Dec 1911, 19.

187. LT 8 Dec 1911, 7; and 15 Dec 1911, 16.

endent labour had knocked some very large holes in their majorities. Neither Avon, nor Christchurch South, nor Christchurch East, could be counted safe any longer for Liberals. In Christchurch, labour and Socialist candidates (including McCombs) took 33.2% of the vote in the seats contested, better than the national figure of 30%,¹⁸⁸. If the election result was not good news for the radical Liberals, it also carried a warning for the Socialist Party. In the two electorates where there was a direct choice, Labour Party candidates had far surpassed Socialists. When it came to parliamentary politics, Christchurch working people supported the gradualist policies of the Labour Party. Partly this was because of the relative stability of the population: there were fewer immigrants in Christchurch than in North Island cities, and a higher number of settled workers who aspired to home ownership.¹⁸⁹. Partly also the reason for the Socialists' small vote was that they did not appear to have a clear parliamentary programme, as their preference was for industrial organisation along Red Fed lines. Voting for the Labour Party was voting for a specific programme of reform; voting for the Socialists was an act of pure protest.

III. The United Labour Party and the Socialist Party, 1912.

Despite the gains in electoral support, the 1911 election did nothing to produce greater unity within the labour movement. Mills continued his 'Unity Campaign' and was fiercely opposed by the Socialists and Red Feds. Although the divisions were bitter,

188. Gustafson, 41-4; 39.

189. E. W. Plumridge 'Labour in Christchurch 1914-1919' 23-32.

they were based on a wide knowledge of radical and socialist thought from Europe and the United States. Some of the Christchurch Socialists were familiar with the ideas of the English libertarian socialist William Morris and the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin. Christchurch Socialists distinguished between the philosophy of these decentralist thinkers and 'the desire to hurl bombs in the midst of people or to blow up buildings, etc. etc. This is deed anarchy; quite a different thing from philosophical anarchy'.¹⁹⁰. These socialists argued that the Labour Party's socialism, which advocated the return of the 'full product of labour' to the workers would not change society enough; what was needed was a vision of 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs'.¹⁹¹. Other militants in the labour movement preferred to stress direct action to win immediate wage rises.¹⁹². Many workers did engage in such action during 1912, at first with considerable success. Sullivan unwittingly conceded the decentralist critique of the NZLP's socialism when he wrote, of Mills' Unity Scheme, that

The aim and object of this great confederation will be to place every working man and every working woman in New Zealand in the position that they will be able to purchase with their income the total value of the product produced by their labour.¹⁹³.

As the radical critics had stressed, this goal did not address questions concerning the production process or human aspirations beyond the economic. Sullivan, one of the most articulate members of the NZLP in Christchurch, often confined his analysis to the clash of interests between monopolists and consumers, not the more fundamental clash between workers and capitalist ownership in

190. LT 2 Jan 1912, 8; from L. R. Wilson of the Christchurch SP.

191. LT 3 Jan 1912, 4; 8 Jan 1912, 8.

192. LT 10 Jan 1912, 2; Letter from S. J. Roscoe a former member of the Christchurch Socialist Party.

193. LT 20 Jan 1912, 12.

itself. Moreover, he linked this analysis to a political programme which relied exclusively on parliamentary action to gain reforms or social change. In support of this position he quoted the French Socialist Jean Jaurès, who condemned the idea

that the State is exclusively a class State upon which the too-feeble hand of the worker cannot yet subscribe the smallest portion of their will. In a democracy... where there is universal suffrage, the State is not for the workers a(n)...absolutely impenetrable block. Penetration has begun already.¹⁹⁴.

Sullivan represented the position of his opponents as a kind of 'impossibilism' which refused to work for reform within the existing system. As the Red Federation repeatedly pointed out, this was not true; the Federation believed in struggling directly against the employers, rather than through the medium of Parliament. The Socialist Party believed

that whatever party administers the affairs of a country by capitalist rules gets the results of Capitalism, which means that...injustices, poverty, and misery are inevitable. Socialism being a system, it is impossible to have it except in its entirety.¹⁹⁵.

At its national conference in April 1912 the Socialist Party adopted the objective of the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and as methods to this end.

- (1) The education of the community in the principles of socialism.
- (2) The industrial organisation of the wage-workers, with revolutionary industrial unionism as a basis.
- (3) The political organisation of the workers at the ballot-box to enforce the recognition of their economic power by legal enactments and the capture of the parliamentary machine, to use its administrative powers for abolishing the present capitalistic state.

These were in order of priority; the Socialist Party believed that social change could not come any other way. It was further resolved that unity of the labour movement 'can only be effected

194. LT 2 Mar 1912, 12.

195. LT 26 Mar 1912, 2.

and effective if based upon the revolutionary Marxian conception of the class struggle'. The Party's strongholds were identified as Auckland, the mining areas in the North Island and Westland, Wellington, and Manawatu. Christchurch comrades were 'doing steady plodding work...the number of gaoled anti-militants shows that rebels are being made'. Yet Christchurch, with 110 members on the books, had the highest number in the country.¹⁹⁶.

Walter Thomas Mills did not share the revolutionary aims of the Socialist Party. The New Zealand Labour Party transformed itself, in accordance with Mills' Unity Scheme, into the United Labour Party in April 1912. The ULP was intended to unite into one organisation both political and industrial action, and thus Trades Councils. Unions affiliated and were divided into occupational groups, the twelve of which each had a representative on the Dominion Executive Council.¹⁹⁷ The Red Federation of Labour and the Socialist Party boycotted the ULP, almost from the start; they regarded it as ignoring the class struggle. The radicals would have been particularly unimpressed by the ULP's Object 3, to promote the workers' 'good citizenship and increase their efficiency'.¹⁹⁸.

There is evidence that Mills and the ULP-for the party depended to a large extent on the figure of the 'Professor' - were bankrolled by 'more than one ambitious politician who hoped

196. Proceedings of 1912 NZSP Conference, SPP. The branch membership were as follows: 66, Auckland; ? Dunedin; 50, Runanga; 110, Christchurch; 15, Denniston; 12, Fielding; 36, Huntly; 30, Millerton; 30, Blackball; 23, Greymouth; 7, Seddonville; 15, Foxton; 15, Wanganui; 20, Westport.

197. Roth, ULP, 28.

198. Handbill in JTP 982/18.

ultimately to climb to power on the back of Labour',¹⁹⁹. and that the chief figure was George Fowlds, a wealthy Auckland draper who resigned from Ward's cabinet in 1911 due to single-tax principles. As well as hoping to use the labour movement as a vehicle for the single-tax movement - which advocated a land tax as the sole means of social reform - Fowlds and others, especially Tom Paul and David McLaren, but also Dan Sullivan, hoped to defeat the radicals for control of the labour movement.²⁰⁰.

In Christchurch the Socialist Party claimed that Mills 'was ready and willing to prostitute his undoubted talents for monetary consideration at the expense of principles'.²⁰¹. They were right; not only had Mills agreed to lecture for the Socialist Party until the NZLP offered a higher income; Mills' 'trail in the socialist movement...(was) strewn with charges of immorality, dishonesty, and fraud'. In the first years of the century he had made his living hiring himself out to the right wing of the American Socialist Party in its attempts to break the centre and left factions.²⁰². There is no evidence, however, that the NZLP knew this when it hired Mills. Fred Cooke claimed that the Socialist Party and its Red Federation allies had on the industrial field 'accomplished more in weeks than Mr. Mills' United Labour Party would accomplish in years...it is more feared by vested interests in this country than ten United Labour Partys would be'.²⁰³ Dan Sullivan, for his part, adopted a more radical tone than was perhaps justified by the ULP manifesto; according to him the Party believed that 'society is organised upon a wrong economic basis,

199. NZ Truth, quoted Roth, ULP, 28.

200. Roth, ULP, 29. His evidence includes Fowlds' letters in AUL.

201. LT 30 Apr 1912, 2.

202. Ira Kipnis, The American Socialist Movement, 180.

203. LT 30 Apr 1912, 2.

namely the carrying on of production for profit'. Sullivan went on to expound on the Marxist theory of wage-labour, and advocate wholesale nationalisation.²⁰⁴ This view, held by most leading members of the ULP in Christchurch, including Jack McCullough, would not have sat well with Fowlds and other wealthy backers of the party who 'had every interest in telling New Zealand workers that their enemy was not the capitalist employer but the land monopolist'.²⁰⁵ Tom Paul, the party president, may have had similar difficulties with Sullivan's language. A number of Christchurch unions, influenced by such respected socialists as Sullivan, Hunter, and McCullough, made moves to affiliate to the ULP.

The ULP's first electoral test in Christchurch was the election for the Tramway Board in May. Six candidates including Hunter, Sullivan, and Burgoyne were nominated. They campaigned on the grievances of the workers over pay and conditions, and on maladministration, citing the purchase of inferior coal at high prices.²⁰⁶ Despite a massive canvassing effort, none of the six were elected; the rolls were restricted to property-holders, and Hunter and Sullivan believed that they were rigged anyway.²⁰⁷ The ULP was more successful in the City Council by-election held when Alfred Hart died of lead poisoning contracted at his trade of painting; James McCullough - Jack's brother - was elected.

204. LT 4 May 1912, 16; 6 July 1912, 16.

205. Roth, ULP, 29. Roth names F. M. King, a clothing manufacturer; Wesley Spragg, manager of the NZ Dairy Association, and Arthur Withy, Snr as the chief Auckland backers of the single-tax movement.

206. LT 15 May 1912, 9; 27 May 1912, 8.

207. LT 28 June 1912, 4; 29 June 1912, 2.

In April Bob Whiting became Mayor of Spreydon.^{208.} Unions however were not overly forthcoming with money for municipal campaigns; the campaign fund was £100 in debit by July and had to mount a special appeal.^{209.}

The Socialist Party and the Red Federation had a propaganda organ in the Maoriland Worker to rival Mills. Commenced as a Shearers' Union monthly, the Worker was a Federation weekly from May 1911 and throughout 1912 it trenchantly criticised the United Labour Party. Ted Howard was the paper's Christchurch correspondent; he wrote under the pen-name of 'The Vag'. The Socialist Party continued to be active in Christchurch. Between December 1911 and March 1912 it held 42 public meetings, 14 dances, three picnics, and 16 socials, and sold £14 worth of literature; party gatherings were always crowded.^{210.}

The Maoriland Worker was at first conciliatory towards the ULP; it wished 'that a greater militancy and a higher understanding had characterised conference week' and feared that the party would 'become dangerously and almost exclusively political' despite having a good Objective.^{211.} But as the United Labour Party and its propagandists continued the campaign against the Federation and any policy which advocated direct action in the workplace, the Worker became fiercely antagonistic. On one occasion Howard described the ULP as a 'clique of paid secretaries

208. LT 22 June 1912, 16. Hart was widely mourned; the TLC had to mount a campaign to get relief for his widow and children.

209. LT 27 July 1912, 16.

210. MW 15 Mar 1912.

211. MW 19 Apr 1912, 8.

doing all it can to block progressive action' and even as traitors to the working class.²¹² The Socialists in Christchurch were enthusiastic in their opposition: 'There is not a public meeting held in Christchurch but what you can find our boys there, helping by interjections and questions to lead the workers towards the light'.²¹³ At one meeting addressed by Mills, the audience of 400 sang the Red Flag at him 'in such a way that no-one could mistake who they were'.²¹⁴

The continuing campaign against compulsory military training reflected the vigor of the Christchurch Socialists, and remained the sole area of co-operation between the antagonists in the 'labour movement. The ULP had a policy for the repeal of compulsion; many unions made resolutions and contributed to activity against conscription. Dozens of young men were prosecuted for failing to register; the Maoriland Worker kept a roll of honour of those who had elected to go to jail rather than pay the fines. This stood at 58 by October 1912; some, like Harry Cooke, returned to jail repeatedly. There was keen competition between the movements in each city as to who could supply the most jail-birds.²¹⁵ This form of resistance was co-ordinated by the 'Passive Resisters' Union, which was formed in February 1912 by a group of young workers at the Addington Railway Workshops. Membership was restricted to those eligible for the draft; the Union's aim was direct resistance. A gratifying 75% of eligible youths in Christchurch failed to show up for military drill during 1912; the system was becoming unworkable. At one stage an audacious

212. MW 11 Oct 1912.

213. MW 16 Feb 1912.

214. MW 8 Nov 1912.

215. MW 25 Oct 1912, 1.

graffiti attack was mounted on the King Edward Barracks; a field gun that had been captured during the South African War was removed, painted red, and dumped in the Avon.²¹⁶

While the Trades Council and the United Labour Party favoured a voluntary defence system, the Socialist Party and the Passive Resisters' Union opposed all military activity by a capitalist state; as Harry Holland said, 'No Socialist, no Republican, no man of the working class fully understanding the constitution of the class State and the nature of the class struggle, can conscientiously take the oath of allegiance'.²¹⁷ Large meetings were held in the city throughout the year to demand the repeal of conscription; crowded socials were held by the Passive Resisters' Union and the Socialist Party to honour resisters who had served prison sentences. By October the City Council was again considering banning open-air public speaking.

The worst conflict in the divided labour movement during 1912 was over the Red Federation's Armageddon at Waihi. The Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury Trades Councils refused to give any aid to the strikers; Mills publicly predicted defeat for the Federation. The United Labour Party's attitude was that 'the American system of warfare is not suitable in a country where the working-man's vote is of the same value as that of the managing director of the Waihi mines...we are now running the risk of losing laws that have greatly improved the position of many of our workers'.²¹⁸ Dan Sullivan criticised the strike as

216. Weitzel, 131.

217. LT 22 July 1912, 5.

218. MW 19 Jul 1912, 8; 26 Jul 1912, 9; 9 Aug 1912, 4.

evidence of the Federation's violent and barbaric intent many times. The Federation responded vigorously: 'seemingly everyone but the Labour Party has noted the remarkably well-behaved demeanour of the Waihi strikers and their orderliness and discipline...the only near-approach to friction has been caused by the State sending police to Waihi, an action which the Labour Party upholds'.²¹⁹ The ULP Executive had indeed condemned the strike but agreed to publish this only in the event that the Federation called a general strike in support of the miners. At the urging of Fowlds and Mills, the party refused to protest against the jailing of strikers' pickets. Tom Paul supported this attitude, but it was viewed with disquiet by Jack McCullough, Edward Tregear (the country's first secretary of Labour), and the Labour MPs.²²⁰ When Mills spoke in Christchurch in October, therefore, he was constantly heckled with calls of 'What about Waihi?' and 'Grandfather Scab'.²²¹

The defeat of the strikers at Waihi had a profound effect on the labour movement. It was heralded by the defeat of another strike at Huntly, where the miners had walked out in protest at the sacking of their union executive. An arbitrationist union was formed by one Thomas Walsh of the Auckland United Labour Party; this had been instrumental in the defeat of the strike. The Red Feds were justifiably bitter at this betrayal, but Dan Sullivan tactlessly remarked that the Federation's 'ignominious surrender... may be taken as the measure of its strength, and incidentally as an indication of the value of the workers' "economic power"

219. LT 24 Sept 1912, 4.

220. McCarthy, Folder I; Roth, ULP, 30.

221. LT 28 Oct 1912, 9.

contrasted with their political power'. Although Sullivan also felt that 'No honest worker in the country can extract any pleasure from the Federation defeat', his remarks could only have increased Federation anger.²²² When the strike at Waihi fell victim to an onslaught of armed police and strike-breakers and one striker was killed, however, Sullivan was silent. A wave of grief and horror was felt by the entire labour movement in Christchurch. Tom Paul was less sensitive; his ULP column in the Lyttelton Times rambled on and on about the stupidity of the strike and the alleged outrages committed by the Federation.²²³

The ULP Executive was, it seems, split over the Waihi strike. In June, Tom Paul, Bob Whiting, David McLaren, E. J. Carey of the Wellington Hotel Workers, and Arthur Withy of the Land Values League, had all wished to publicly condemn the strike. McCullough and the Labour MPs had felt that it would be 'opposed to labour principle...to do anything which might be used to the detriment of workers who, right or wrong, are fighting common enemy'.²²⁴ In Christchurch, unionists seem overwhelmingly to have supported McCullough's line; thousands were unable to get into the hall to hear Robert Semple a few days after the strike had been broken. Only five or six students, whose daring was exceeded only by their stupidity, opposed the motion condemning 'the most atrocious and lawless acts'; after the meeting the students were chased around the town with sticks.²²⁵ Numerous unions passed resolutions condemning the Government and calling for a public inquiry into the strike generally and Frederick Evans' death particularly.

222. LT 2 Nov 1912, 16.

223. LT 23 Nov 1912, 16.

224. Telegram, quoted Roth ULP, 30.

225. LT 18 Nov 1912, 7; MW 29 Nov 1912, 7.

The Red Federation, for its part, determined to bring about a closer unity of the country's workers. On 27 November the Federation's Executive issued an invitation to all unions, craft and industrial, Federation, Trades Council, ULP, and nonaligned, to a conference in January 1913 to work out a way of confronting the threat posed by the Massey Government and of creating a more united movement.²²⁶ Although the United Labour Party's leaders were suspicious,²²⁷ a large number of Christchurch unions accepted the invitation. They were pushed along by a rank and file that desired unity above all else, and that had become suddenly and painfully aware of the danger posed by an aggressive State working closely and openly with employers.

226. Hickey, 56-7.

227. E.g. ULP Column in LT 14 Dec 1912, 16; Sullivan, 28 Dec 1912, 1

CHAPTER FIVEUNITY, CRISIS, AND THE COMING OF WAR, 1913-14.

The bloody defeat of the Waihi strikers by employers and the Government in November 1912 showed that the struggles of the working class had become more bitter and more deadly than they had been for twenty years. The defeats inflicted on the miners at Waihi and Huntly and on the Auckland General Labourers' Union a few months earlier showed that the employers were determined to break militant unionism, and had organised to achieve that aim. The employers were now aided by a government that was only too willing to use state force against militant workers.

For its part, the Red Federation saw that unity in the labour movement was essential to meet the employers' threat. The plain fact was that labour organisations had to hang together, or they would be hung separately. This was the situation when the Unity Conference opened in Wellington in January 1913. The conference resulted in substantial progress towards a united labour movement.

Employers were not slow to recognise the threat that this unity represented to them. As well as the constant attack on the workers' position and union organisation that took place on the shop floor, there was an attempt to break the labour movement's united bodies. The resulting strike lasted almost two months and the effects of the workers' defeat were felt until after the First World War.

II. The Unity Movement in Christchurch

The Red Federation's invitation to the Unity Conference was at first greeted with scepticism by some Christchurch union leaders. The United Labour Party was hostile; it claimed that the most important question currently facing the workers was land monopoly, not a concerted attack on unionism by the employers and the Government. According to the ULP, the Federation would have to withdraw its opposition to the Arbitration Act before a conference could be worthwhile.¹ Perhaps the United Labour Party's leadership was frightened of the possibility of unity on a more radical platform than that of the ULP; at the end of December Dan Sullivan compared the Federation's invitation to the spider's invitation to the fly and claimed that the conference had 'failed to receive any very marked response among any of the Unions, and in not a single instance has any chartered body allied to the United Labour Party responded favourably'.² Maybe that was because the ULP didn't have very many bodies affiliated to it; many unions had expressed interest but had not yet committed themselves. A few days after Sullivan's claim was printed the Lyttelton Times (hardly an admirer of the Red Federation) reported that the Federation looked set to 'meet with a good deal of success in its efforts to bring its trade union rivals to a friendly conference about matters of joint concern'. The unions that had so far accepted were expected to send 'over sixty delegates', including those from nine Christchurch unions;³ the Conference opened with 112 present. In all, 79 organisations were represented: 27 from Christchurch, eight from Auckland, ten from the West Coast, nine

1. LT 14 Dec 1912, 16; MW 17 Jan 1913, 7.

2. LT 26 Dec 1912, 16.

3. LT 3 Jan 1913, 5.

from Wellington, eight from Dunedin, and 17 from smaller centres or national federations.⁴

Given the reputation that this city has for conservatism, it may seem surprising that Christchurch unions made up over a third of those represented. Obviously, too, the hopes of the United Labour Party had not been realised. The rank and file membership of the unions had taken over. John Petterd, an official in the Typographical Union, said as much in a letter to the Dunedin socialist Arthur McCarthy. Unity, wrote Petterd,

is a movement of the rank and file, as workers, as men, we have too long been separated - our aims are identical, our hopes, our dangers, the same - we have wasted valuable years fighting amongst ourselves - and our would-be leaders are to a great extent to blame - the rank-and-file want to see these differences swept away - want to feel that the workingclass movement is a forward movement.⁵

The Red Federation pressed home its invitation with a steady flow of circulars to unions, asking them to accept the invitation if they hadn't already discussed it, or reconsider if they'd declined.⁶ Bob Semple and Ted Howard addressed a large audience at the King's Theatre a week before the conference opened.

Semple's speech cleverly appealed to the long tradition of radical Liberalism in this city; Seddon, he said,

was a man with backbone, who had forced splendid legislation in the teeth of the mob now masquerading under the name of a Reform Party. If Mr. Seddon had lived he would have accomplished vast improvements for the working people.⁷

The Unity Conference opened in Wellington on 20 January 1913. The conference first dealt with the arbitration laws. It passed

4. MW 24 Jan 1913; Hickey, 58.

5. Petterd to McCarthy. 2 May 1913. APM Paper VIII.

6. LT 6 Jan 1913, 8.

7. LT 13 Jan 1913, 5.

remits which stated that no union should be registered to rival a union which had withdrawn from the arbitration system; this practice had been used as an employers' weapon at Waihi, Huntly, and Auckland.⁸

At the beginning of the Conference Hiram Hunter of the Christchurch Drivers' Union moved to invite the United Labour Party to send two delegates. The Federation had not invited the ULP because it regarded the party as a political, not an industrial, organisation. Hunter recognised that the ULP had to take part in the conference if any real unity was to result from it, but he was opposed by the majority of Federation delegates. They deeply resented the lack of support given by the ULP to the Waihi strikers. After considerable discussion it was decided to invite the ULP, the Socialist Party, and the Industrial Workers of the World. The two former organisations sent delegates.⁹

The Conference then began to consider forms of organisation. The main issue to resolve was whether there should be one organisation covering both industrial and political fields (the ULP model) or separate industrial and political organisations. It was moved by Robert Ross, editor of the Federation's Maoriland Worker, and Hiram Hunter, that since 'political action is necessary and inevitable in the working-class movement', a political party should be set up. Paddy Webb of the Federation moved to establish 'one organisation in the industrial field'. Some ULP members,

8. Hickey, 60-61.

9. LT 22 Jan 1913, 10; Hickey, 61-2. Hickey implies the invitation was sent after arbitration had been dealt with; the Lyttelton Times report shows that it was done straight after the opening speeches.

including W. T. Mills and Bob Whiting, opposed separate organisations but the resolutions were carried by a large majority.

The resolutions were referred to a committee of 12 (seven Red Feds and five ULP members including Hunter, Webb, Hickey, Mills, and Tregear) which unanimously agreed on draft constitutions.

These were to be taken up and down the country for approval and comment by unions and socialist groups, and a further conference was called for July to make the final decision.¹⁰.

The United Federation of Labour, as the new industrial body was called, closely reflected the principles and structure of the old Red Federation. Its Preamble was couched in militant language proclaiming 'the historic mission of the working-class to do away with capitalism'. A structure from local unions through industrial departments (covering workers in common trades) to the national executive was provided for. Each union would choose whether to remain under the arbitration system and was autonomous in all other matters, except that any proposed strike affecting other unions had to be referred to the department. Among the objects of the UFL was the abolition of contract and bonus systems of wages.

The Social Democratic Party was the new political organisation. Its objective was the 'socialisation of the collectively-used means of production, distribution, and exchange', which was both shorter and more radical than that of the NZLP or the ULP. Membership was open to unions and individuals prepared to endorse the

10. LT 24 Jan 1913, 7, 8; 25 Jan 1913, 12, 13; Hickey, 63-8. The draft constitutions are in Hickey, 65-8.

objective.

Unity Committees were established in the various cities, in co-operation with the national committee, to prepare for July. Delegates to the conference had realised that the members of their organisations desired unity; Dan Sullivan, a convert to the cause, reported long and hearty cheering when the decision to unite was made. Sullivan's report to the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council was received 'with eulogistic thanks', and the Council endorsed the conference's decisions.¹¹ The working people of Christchurch were just as enthusiastic: Bob Semple and W. T. Mills addressed a packed theatre. The Red Flag was sung, and Semple told the audience about the deputation the conference had sent to the Prime Minister:

We talked to Bill the other day...and we told him some truths. (A voice: 'He didn't like it'.) Before the party was elected he said he would give the working man a square deal, and this is the square deal he gave us.

Here Mr. Semple produced a baton, which he declared 'Bill' had adopted to carry out his policy. The batons had been turned out on the Waihi company's premises, and had been placed in each free labourer's hands. 'Shall I call them scabs?' asked the speaker, and he was greeted by a great cry of assent.

A resolution endorsing the decisions of the conference was carried unanimously, and a further resolution, calling for a general strike in the event of war, was also passed unanimously. 'Cheers were then given for the movement, followed by hooting for the Prime Minister and General Godley', the army's chief of staff.¹²

Waihi and conscription were things the workers of Christchurch

11. LT 27 Jan 1913, 8; TLC 30 Jan 1913.

12. LT 3 Feb 1913, 8.

felt very strongly about. Conscription was in fact quite unworkable in Christchurch and on the West Coast; fully 75% of those who should have turned up for drill in Christchurch failed to do so. The centres of resistance were the Oxford Terrace Baptist Church and the Addington Railway Workshops. Since 1911 activists had been refusing to register for training, refusing to pay the fines, speaking in public without a permit, refusing to pay the fines for that, clogging the courtrooms up (every Friday was set aside at the Magistrates' Court for draft dodgers); and the movement grew in strength as time went on.¹³ Public speaking was usually done in front of the Clock Tower in Victoria Street, and the police often broke the meetings up with force. Ted Howard wondered 'Why is it that since these people have taken to using the baton so freely that their numbers are not now displayed either on their helmets or on their coats?'¹⁴.

Feelings on both Waihi and conscription were made plain when Massey tried to deliver a policy speech in Christchurch in March 1913. Two thousand people were inside the Theatre Royal, and 2000 outside. The crowd was divided; The Red Flag was sung, followed by Rule Britannia, followed by We'll Hang Bill Massey on a Sour Old Apple Tree. Socialists had gotten into the front row, the better to lead the heckling, which was along the lines of 'What about Waihi?' and 'What about conscription?' The Waihi strikers were cheered, and The Red Flag sung again when Massey mentioned land policy. The customary motion of thanks was defeated by six to one. A week later the Social Democrats held a meeting in response to Massey and crowded the King's Theatre. The crowd

13. R. L. Weitzel 'Pacifists and Anti-Militarists in New Zealand'.

14. MW 28 Mar 1913. Similar complaints were made in 1981, during the Springbok Tour demonstrations.

was enthusiastic; the speakers, including Fred Cooke, Dan Sullivan, Ted Howard, and Paddy Webb, denounced the Prime Minister at length, and the assembly unanimously resolved its lack of confidence in Massey. They also noted that, unlike the Prime Minister, the Social Democrats didn't need the police to keep order at their meetings.^{15.}

Behind the heckling and the street politics there was a great deal of hard work by the Unity Committees. The Christchurch committee was formed soon after the January conference; 75 people attended the first meeting.^{16.} Individual unions were lobbied and pamphlets and newspaper articles written. Meetings were held at factories, on the wharves, and for the general public. The progress of the Unity Movement in Christchurch was closely linked to that of the anti-militarism campaign; many activists in one were also heavily involved in the other.

The Social Democratic Party was established in Christchurch some months before it was formally inaugurated by the July conference; most United Labour Party branches simply changed their name and adopted the new platform. The municipal elections in April were fought by labour under the Social Democratic banner on a platform of the municipalisation of water, power, and gas; the clearance of slums and establishment of workers' housing; the setting up of municipal labour exchanges; and the hiring of day-labour rather than contract labour for all municipal works. The Social Democrats' candidate for the Mayoralty was T. J. McBride,

15. LT 12 Mar 1913, 9; MW 21 Mar 1913, 3; LT 17 Mar 1913, 9.

16. LT 7 Feb 1913, 7.

a Canadian-born businessman who had long been involved in socialist politics in the city.¹⁷ The Citizens' Association, established the year before to organise conservative forces in municipal matters, complained loudly about the introduction of class struggle to local body politics. Dan Sullivan retorted that 'By their insults to the workers' representatives, their accusations of incapacity, their solemn warnings to the public to beware of electing working men, our opponents have themselves made this election a class struggle'. The Social Democrats openly proclaimed that they were 'standing in the interests of the working class'; there was little rhetoric now about 'representing the whole community'.¹⁸ The SDP mounted a long and thorough campaign to get the vote out; the party's women members were very active in this and Sullivan paid tribute to them for having 'toiled with an energy beyond their strength that Labour might have victory'.¹⁹

The Social Democrats kept all four seats in the City's Sydenham ward: indeed, only one conservative candidate bothered to oppose them. James McCombs, now a Social Democrat, topped the poll in the Linwood ward, but the incumbent labour councillor, W. R. Smith, was defeated. There were also three Social Democrats elected to the new Riccarton Borough Council, and two to the Woolston Borough Council. Labour mayors were elected on both councils. Once on the City Council, however, the Social Democrats were in a minority. They failed by 18 votes to 5 to get a wage rise for the Council's workers.

17. LT 1 Mar 1913, 16; 22 Mar 1913, 16.

18. LT 11 Mar 1913, 3; 12 Apr 1913, 16; 1 May 1913, 8.

19. LT 1 May 1913, 7,8; 3 May 1913, 16; 22 Jul 1913, 11.

In the Social Democrats' first test of strength they had slightly increased the labour vote in the city and made big gains in the boroughs. The Linwood committee of the SDP made a profit of £2 on its post-election social and decided to establish a permanent social committee. The party's socials soon became very popular indeed and contributed to its strength greatly.²⁰.

After months of preparation, the July Unity Congress opened with 391 delegates present, representing 247 industrial and political organisations throughout the country. 66 of these delegates came from Christchurch. The only major trade in Christchurch that was not represented was the building trade; both 'carpenters' unions had long been aligned with the Liberal Party. Sixty thousand New Zealand workers were directly represented at the Congress; it amounted to a national declaration of independence. John Rigg, the old Labour MLC, who presided, declared that 'the time has arrived when the workers should govern themselves. They have too long sat at the foot of other parties and have had to beg as favours what they should have demanded and taken as rights'.²¹.

The Congress voted by a fairly narrow majority of thirty to set up two organisations rather than one. The constitutions of the UFL and the SDP were ratified by overwhelming majorities. The preamble to the UFL constitution was taken out; Dan Sullivan spoke strongly in favour of a less syndicalist document; 'The less they had in the constitution the better it would be - the

20. LT 5 June 1913, 6.

21. JTP 982/18.

easier to break down opposition...²². The UFL thus had as its first Object:

To organise systematically upon an industrial union basis, in order to assist the overthrow of the capitalist system, and thus bring about a Co-operative Commonwealth, based upon industrial democracy.

The new preamble was regarded as a defeat by the Red Federation's leaders, but was still too radical for a small minority at the Congress: representatives of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and of the single-tax organisations, walked out. They were joined by a small minority of ULP members. Employees of the Addington Railway Workshops sent a telegram strongly protesting against the ASRS walkout.²³.

Before the Congress ended, it marched down to Parliament to demand an end to conscription, and the release of all jailed resisters. The reception from Massey was not encouraging.

Almost all present agreed that the Congress had been a great success. Ted Howard, who was perhaps the most pessimistic of the prominent Christchurch activists, was not entirely euphoric. There had been some debate on the strike clauses in the UFL constitution, and these clauses caused the right wing to walk out. Writing as 'The Vag' in the Maoriland Worker, Howard reported it like this:

No, we mustn't have strikes; if Henry gets used to striking some of us might have to go to work. Mr. Withy turned pale, Mr. Fowlds shivered, Mr. Carey's hair stood on end, and the Vag caught Professor Mills's eye, and the Professor winked, and all the Vag's fears seemed to vanish....That wink meant that Henry wouldn't take it on; Henry wouldn't strike. Give Henry a quarter-

22. Ibid.

23. Hickey, 71; JTP 982/18; JAM, Diary, 5 Jul 1913.

acre section with a wooden house and a mortgage on it, and Henry would work himself into the grave rather than take a holiday on strike....But it was a great Congress.²⁴.

A few months later, Howard was shown to be not entirely correct; the employers deemed the Congress results to be such a threat that they forced Henry to strike all around the country.

An attempt was made by some United Labour Party members to keep that organisation going and thereby to undermine the new bodies. The ULP rump met in Wellington a few days after the Unity Congress had finished and proclaimed its intentions, 'by constant revision and improvement of the existing conditions of society to advance the well-being of the people as a whole and not merely the sectional interests of a class'.²⁵. Tom Paul of Dunedin and David McLaren of Wellington were the leaders of the remnant.²⁶.

The attempts to keep the United Labour Party going had little support in Christchurch. The Christchurch South branch of the ULP, which was Bob Whiting's power-base, voted unanimously to remain separate,²⁷. but Whiting was the only prominent union activist in Christchurch who continued to support the ULP. There was much controversy over whether Paul had pledged to support the Unity Congress's conclusions; he denied having done so. McLaren visited Christchurch at the end of July, and reported to Paul that

The local unions are mostly hanging back from making

24. MW 25 Jul 1913, 6.

25. LT 12 July 1913, 14.

26. McLaren had suddenly discovered an enthusiasm for the ULP; before the Unity Congress he had done no work for it and didn't even answer mail, despite being on the Dominion Executive. A. P. McCarthy, X.

27. Whiting to Paul 16 July 1913, JTP 982/359.

any decision on the Unity Congress proposals. All the big guns of the UFL and SDP are here and though they have made much noise I do not think they have made much impression.

McLaren complained that many former ULP unions had 'lost heart' as far as that organisation was concerned, but he was optimistic that the new organisations would gain little support.²⁸

Two days later Bob Semple effectively scuttled McLaren's hopes. Semple spoke to a meeting of the Trades Council and

convinced the men who had fought him for years, and a resolution was carried unanimously; That delegates should pledge themselves to do their utmost to induce their Unions to join the UF of Labour....Everybody seems to be carried away with Semple's utterances on that night, and if the present feeling keeps up, they will capture a large number of the Unions here.²⁹

A meeting of Unity Congress delegates, representing most of the important unions in Christchurch, repudiated the attempts to keep the ULP going, and claimed that Paul had indeed pledged to support the Congress decisions. Whiting believed that, if Paul had made such a pledge,

it makes it very hard for us to keep the Labour Party going....It was the talk of the town all yesterday and last night. As I went through the Town I found small groups discussing the question, and some of the men stated to me that they believed you would admit having made the pledge.³⁰

Paul replied to Whiting, denying that he had ever made such a pledge.

The manoeuvrings of the ULP and the SDP clearly attracted much interest. The right wing of the ULP had been trying even before July to ensure that the Unity Congress avoided militancy;³¹ Jack McCullough believed that 'The sort of 'tripe' dished up by

28. McLaren to Paul, 29 July 1913, JTP 982/359.

29. Whiting to Paul, 3 Aug 1913, JTP 982/359.

30. Ibid; Paul to Whiting, 11 Aug 1913, JTP 982/359.

31. E.g. Corresp. McLaren & Paul, JTP 982/359.

Mac (Laren) is the stuff that has convinced so many honest workers that the most effective way to destroy the usefulness of a Labour man is to put him into Parliament'. McCullough wished 'to the Lord it were possible to force Mac into his former position of having to hang round the wharf waiting for an hour or two's work', in order to remind McLaren of what he used to believe in.³² Most former ULP leaders and affiliated bodies had been enthusiastic enough about the ULP when it was created but saw the Unity proposals, emphasising both political and industrial organisation, as a far better structure. That was why the remnant of the United Labour Party attracted so little support. Unity, above all else, had been recognised as an overwhelming necessity, thus, many who had reservations about the industrial organisation of the UFL, who like Dan Sullivan believed 'that only by rightly-directed political activity can society be reconstructed in a manner that will prevent the legalised robbery of Labour', accepted the results of the Unity Congress. The choice was 'perpetuating past strike, or accepting that which is unsatisfactory'. Sullivan believed that

The great mass of the workers who support our movement are not concerned about abstract questions, or even questions relating to the form of organisation. Philosophy is nothing to them. They want the concrete reality of a powerful movement, which they can support with confidence in its capacity to fight their battles industrially and politically.³³

Most Christchurch unions favoured the Social Democratic Party rather than the United Federation of Labour; there remained a strong belief that parliamentary action was more important than

32. McCullough to McCarthy, 1 June 1913, McIII.

33. LT 2 Aug 1913, 16.

industrial organisation. Moreover, the unions were generally slow to make up their minds to affiliate, despite the enthusiastic reception given to Semple and other national leaders.³⁴

The General Labourers' Union, the Drivers' Union and the Lyttelton Waterside Workers' Union were among the first unions to decide their position; they affiliated to both the UFL and the SDP early in August. The Canterbury Shearers' Union followed quickly, as did the Metalworkers' Assistants, the Tinsmiths and the printing unions had joined by the end of the month.³⁵ The new organisations' attempts to gain affiliations were not helped by the weakness of the Canterbury Trades Council. Years of fighting over ideology and forms of organisation, as well as the Council's concentration on parliamentary politics to the exclusion of shop floor matters, had caused many unions to become disillusioned with the Council.

The strength of the United Federation was the same as that of the old Red Federation; it was centred on mining, transport and shearing unions, with the addition of some metal trades workers and others. Most unions had not committed themselves by the end of the United Federation's first four months of life; thus, when the employers moved against the Federation it was relatively weak.

II. The Employers Strike Back

A. Before the Great Strike: January - October 1913. Waihi had

34. A meeting in the Colosseum held at the end of July was addressed by Henry Voyce, Ted Howard, and Bob Semple; over 2000 people attended and unanimously carried a motion of support for the results of the Unity Congress, with 3 cheers for the UFL. LT 28/7/13, 11.

35. LT 2 Aug 1913, 11; 4 Aug 1913, 9; 6 Aug 1913, 10; 27 Aug 1913, 9; 29 Aug 1913, 7; 2 Sept 1913, 7.

shown the lengths to which employers and the Government were prepared to go in order to break militant unionism. The first ten months of 1913 saw increased organisation by the country's employers against the labour movements. The Government, for its part, prepared legislation to further the employers' aims.

The slaughtermen were the first to learn that Waihi was not an isolated incident. They had been among the more successful exponents of direct action; in 1907 they had gone on strike and won a large wage rise, and in 1910 the mere threat sufficed. In January 1913 they tried again. A claim had been lodged in July 1912 for an increase in wages of five shillings per hundred, to 30 shillings. The employers refused to go beyond 27s6d; in January the union gave 14 days' notice to strike, beginning in Wellington. In 1910 this notice made the employers pay up; in 1913 it merely gave them time to organise strikebreakers. It was rumoured that the Canterbury employers were willing to pay 30 shillings, but this was never confirmed; in any case, they submitted to majority opinion.³⁶.

In order to legalise the strike, the Slaughtermen's Federation cancelled its registration under the 1894 Act. The Department of Labour at first refused to accept this; the Federation believed that dirty tricks were in operation. Once the strike was on, the individual Slaughtermen's unions applied for re-registration under the 1894 Act; this was done to prevent employers forming and controlling a new 1894 union.³⁷.

36. LT 17 Jan 1913, 8.

37. LT 11 Jan 1913, 12; 6 Feb 1913, 8.

The Canterbury slaughtermen gave notice to strike a week after Wellington. The employers refused to offer more than 27'6, and also refused to agree to further restrictions on the number of learners. The workers' case was the same as in earlier wage claims: difficult and dangerous work, with time often lost due to injury, and only seasonal employment. The restriction on learners was felt to be necessary to ensure that they got taught properly. The union president questioned whether the employers were 'competent...to judge the value of the work performed by the slaughtermen, since none of them have ever performed such work'.³⁸.

The strikes began on schedule as the employers refused to concede. The Slaughtermen's Federation tried to negotiate with companies individually, but this was not successful. The Federation had expected a victory as easy as those of 1907 and 1910; they did not expect strikebreakers and did not put pickets up. The atmosphere at Islington was lighthearted; the men were keen for a holiday and even cracked jokes with the managers.³⁹.

Slowly the strikebreakers began working; the companies had some difficulty finding them at first, especially in Christchurch. The strike lasted five weeks and then began to collapse; at the end of February the Canterbury union accepted the employers' terms. Many strikebreakers were kept on; the companies agreed with the union to give preference to the married and the settled workers in rehiring strikers.⁴⁰. At Belfast, almost all the

38. LT 20 Jan 1913, 7.

39. LT 29 Jan 1913, 9, 10; 30 Jan 1913, 7, 8.

40. LT 28 Feb 1913, 7.

strikers got their jobs back, but at Islington only 30 out of 70 strikers were rehired. There was no visible animosity between strikers and strikebreakers; the penalty for calling a strike-breaker a 'scab' was dismissed.⁴¹

There were some recriminations after the defeat; the Slaughtermen's Federation was reported to have felt it was beaten because it got no support from other unions, but the Maoriland Worker had a different explanation. The Worker alleged that the leaders of the Federation had made it plain that they didn't want any help from anyone else, not even other workers in the meat industry, but preferred to try to 'win off their own bats and then proclaim their victory from the housetops as an example of their industrial genius'. The union was warned that it would 'have to join hands with all workers in the meat works all over New Zealand or go down to defeat...because of the curse of sectional unionism'.⁴² The warning was justified; the Slaughtermen's Federation had been quite unprepared for the possibility that the employers might resist the demands and organise strikebreakers. Throughout 1912 there had been signs that direct action would be resisted by the employers wherever it occurred.

The employers were also determined not to grant concessions through arbitration. Christchurch's General Labourers demanded wage rises in early 1913; quarry workers held a large meeting at Trades Hall in January and resolved to ask for 1'4½ per day, an increase of 3d, and a maximum of two hours' work per day on a

41. LT 4 Mar 1913, 7.

42. LT 14 Mar 1913, 7; MW 28 Mar 1913, 3.

crusher for any one worker.⁴³ The employers refused to meet the union in conference, simply failing to turn up on the appointed day.⁴⁴ The union had no option but to apply to the Arbitration Court, where a wage of 1'2 per hour was fixed. Nothing was said in the award about crushers, although proportions of youths to adults were fixed. The wage fixed was actually an increase on the figure recommended by the Conciliation Council, which had adopted the employers' figure.⁴⁵

Building trades employers attempted in early 1913 to get a separate award for labourers; their trade had always been under the same award as local bodies. This was not successful. The aim of the employers in this had been to create a separate union for builders' labourers. Ted Howard warned the union that they should 'watch this move on the part of the employers very carefully or they will find the union again split up into sections'.⁴⁶ The employers clearly didn't like a large and strong General Labourers' Union that covered a diversity of trades. Some avoided dealing with the GLU by forcing carpenters to do labourers' work, on pain of being sacked for refusing.

Christchurch's tramway workers continued to have problems with the Tramway Board. A conference between the union and the Board had met at intervals throughout 1912 and finally brought down a report in March 1913. The results of these many months' meetings were an agreement by the General Manager to consider providing summer uniforms, and a decision to refer all the other

43. LT 16 Jan 1913, 7.

44. GLU 18 Feb 1913.

45. BoA XIV, 1913, 798.

46. GLU 4 Feb 1913.

grievances to yet another committee.⁴⁷ The union was not impressed; it referred some matters to the Department of Labour but could do nothing about most of the grievances. The Board continued to draw up bad rosters and use the demerit system, and other disciplinary means.⁴⁸

Few unions secured wage increases during 1913. Bootmakers got a small increase in the Conciliation Council by agreeing to keep all the other terms of the old award; the Tailoresses' Federation won an increase of 2'6 per week, but only for those workers with five years' service. This was more than half the average working life of tailoresses; many, therefore, got no increase.⁴⁹

Life continued to be grim for many in Christchurch. When Robert Falcon Scott and his party perished in the Antarctic, there was a great patriotic fuss. Ted Howard, who was unrivalled as a critic of social injustice, complained that

All that could possibly exploit this business have done so....This...is getting on my nerves. It was a gamble, and they lost, and why howl about it?....The other week a poor old bottom-dogger was told that he had a clot of blood on the brain, and if he didn't give up work he would die. He had a wife and four children. He went to work, because he was not prepared to see his children starve, and they buried him that Wednesday! Any monuments? Not much! His wife will have to go out washing.⁵⁰

And a few months later, Howard related that a young woman with two children 'and another one expected every day' had taken her children to a Socialist Party tea, 'and that was the first square

47. LT 13 Mar 1913, 7; TU nd.

48. TU 1 Apr 1913.

49. LT 17 Apr 1913, 8; 19 Mar 1913, 9.

50. MW 7 Mar 1913, 7.

meal for some time'. However,

right in front of the Labourers' office in the city destructor, and this Vag. was told that cases of good fruit, fish, and other eatables were sent to this burning-pit and used to generate electricity, because the owners could not make a profit out of it.⁵¹

Widespread unemployment existed through the winter of 1913, and affected bootmakers and building-trade workers as well as the unskilled. It led to some bitter graffiti on the walls of the Labour Department offices: 'This land is ——— through immergration!'; 'Is NZ a good country? Yes, a good country to be out of', and

New Zealand's a free country
Free without a doubt
If you haven't got the price of a meal
You're free to go without.⁵²

Poverty was increasing, and unions were finding it much more difficult to operate effectively in the arbitration system. The employers were continuing to run an effective advocacy of their own interests. During 1913, the New Zealand Employers' Federation became more openly aggressive. It established a 'Defence Fund', in order 'To Combat Socialism, Syndicalism, and Anarchy'.⁵³ The Federation's objectives, set out in a manifesto published in April 1913, were

To oppose extreme agitation, syndicalisers, and revolutionary Socialists; to promote unity of the genuine workers and the employers for the purpose of developing the industries of the dominion and the education of public opinion; the securing of industrial legislation which will benefit all classes of the community as opposed to class legislation...⁵⁴

There was a secret meeting held in the rooms of the Canterbury

- 51. MW 19 Sept 1913, 6.
- 52. LT 1 Aug 1913, 9; 11 Jul 1913, 4.
- 53. LT 7 Feb 1913, 4.
- 54. LT 30 Apr 1913, 13.

Chamber of Commerce in August to plan the establishment of a reserve force of strikebreakers; a committee was established to prepare a report. The lesson of the slaughtermen's strike earlier in the year had not been lost on the employers.^{55.}

Farmers were getting particularly aggressive. The Canterbury Provincial Conference of the Farmers' Union declared the Arbitration Act to be 'a fraud, a delusion, and a snare'; it proposed the abolition of preference and the outlawing of picketing or any other attempt to dissuade people from breaking a strike. The president of the union also suggested soapbox speakers should be banned or made undesirable aliens.^{56.}

In this instance at least, when the Farmers' Union talked, the Government acted. Massey had already indicated his intention to amend the labour laws. In March a deputation of coalminers from Huntly took a petition of 500 of their comrades to the Prime Minister; it requested an inquiry into the circumstances of the establishment of an arbitration union. There were strong words and Massey said he would amend the laws, to 'restore... industrial peace, which, he was sorry to say, had been disturbed for the past twelve months'.^{57.}

Thus the Labour Disputes Investigation Bill was presented to Parliament. This Bill required compulsory arbitration of all disputes on the application of either party. This meant that unions cancelling their registration under the 1894 Arbitration

55. LT 8 Aug 1913, 5.

56. LT 30 May 1913, 3; 31 May 1913, 7.

57. LT 7 Mar 1913, 8.

Act could no longer pursue direct bargaining unless their employers agreed; it effectively outlawed industrial unionism. Any proposed strike or lockout, to be legal, had to be notified to the Minister of Labour before it took place. Any union that took any part in or gave any aid to an illegal strike was liable to a £1000 fine - employers were only liable to a fine of £500 for an illegal lockout. The definition of 'striking' was widened to include refusing to enter new contracts, as the shearers had done in 1910 to force a wage rise.

The Employers' Association was, naturally, pleased with the new Bill, which passed through Parliament at the end of the year. Since 1890 no Government had so openly abandoned the pretence of neutrality in labour legislation. Bob Whiting, who was prominent in the Bootmakers' Union and Mayor of Spreydon, commented that the Bill was 'in the interests of the unscrupulous employer and in the interests of those employers and capitalists whose one desire is to kill trade unionism in this country'.⁵⁸ Dan Sullivan, newly converted to industrial unionism, said that the issue of striking was one of tactics and was for the workers alone to decide. The Social Democratic Party held a large protest meeting.⁵⁹ The Lyttelton Waterside Workers' Union also held a meeting, attended by 300 of them. They felt that the Bill was 'the most dastardly attempt to interfere with the liberty of the workers that has ever been introduced in the history of New Zealand'.⁶⁰ Ted Howard told the Canterbury Trades Council that Ward's government had defended the interests of capitalism more

58. LT 16 Sept 1913, 5.

59. LT 20 Sept 1913, 16; 6 Oct 1913, 8.

60. LT 11 Oct 1913, 9.

effectively than Massey did, as Ward relied on bribing the workers, while Massey used nothing but coercion, which angered and united the working class.⁶¹

The storm-clouds were gathering. The rhetoric of employers' organisations was not much more extreme than usual. Now, however, there was a Government prepared to translate that rhetoric into legislation, and to put the full force of the State at employers' disposal. Waihi had only resulted in a strengthening of organised labour; the United Federation of Labour was larger and more popular than the old Red Federation: in the months since Waihi, many workers had come to regard direct action as acceptable. This was due to years of falling real wages, and the employers' offensive for control of the workplace, as well as the bloody events of November 1912. The country's employers were determined to break this militant unionism, whether by a massive showdown or by picking unions off one by one. The Great Strike of October 1913 was a battle over control of the workplace, but it was made entirely by the employers, who were determined to smash the United Federation of Labour and enforce compulsory arbitration.

B. The Great Strike October - December 1913.

The strike began in two locations: Wellington and Huntly. In Wellington the port's shipwrights, 36 in number and employed by the Union Steamship Company, the Harbour Board, and one other firm, had been negotiating for a substantial wage rise. The employers offered very little; the shipwrights went on strike on 17 October.

61. LT 29 Sept 1913, 5.

The employers refused to consider changing their terms, and furthermore demanded that the shipwrights leave the Waterside Workers' Union and the United Federation of Labour. The Wellington Waterside Workers' Union held a stopwork meeting, attended by 1000 workers. The dispute was referred to the UFL; but when the men returned to work at 10am many of them found their jobs taken by others. Fifteen hundred waterside workers met that afternoon and called a strike until those affected were reinstated.⁶²

At Huntly, the miners struck on 19 October. There had always been layoffs in the summer, affecting one or two hundred of the 1200 workers employed at the mine; in 1913 the layoffs included a number of long-serving union officials, men who had worked there for up to 15 years.⁶³

The issue at Huntly was victimisation of unionists; at Wellington it was the workers' right to belong to the UFL. Regardless of whether the employers had intended to take on the whole United Federation of Labour, the UFL could hardly avoid resisting such a challenge to its organisation; to have done so would have been to accept unions being broken one by one. In a sense the United Federation fell into the employers' trap by calling a major strike before it was ready. But there was no alternative: if the UFL had allowed employers to dictate whether unions could belong to it, it might as well have dissolved itself at birth. The only choice was abject surrender or a glorious defeat.

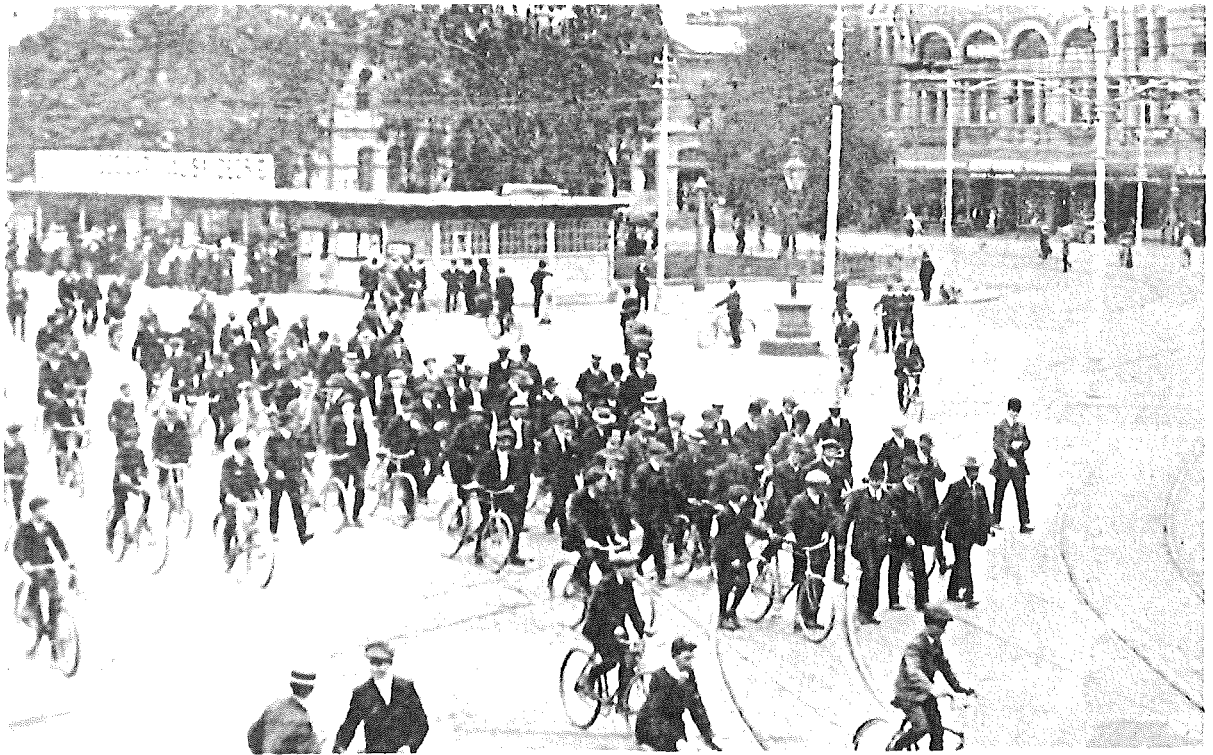
Pickets went up in Wellington the day after the watersiders

62. LT 18 Oct 1913, 11; 21 Oct 1913, 7; 23 Oct 1913, 7,8.

63. LT 20 Oct 1913, 8; 21 Oct 1913, 8.

The Great Strike: top - Christchurch Drivers were the only union in the city apart from the Watersiders to go out. This shows a number of them leaving after a demonstration in the Square.
bottom: paper boys from the Star went on strike for higher pay. They didn't get it.

- Canterbury Times 3 Dec 1913, 37.



called the strike. Employers offered reinstatement without victimisation, but also without the old agreement; they claimed it had been rendered null by the strike. This was unanimously rejected by the strikers, and the United Federation stated it would hold out for the old terms of employment. Strikers rushed the wharves and ships' officers started pushing them around; fistfights began between strikers and strikebreakers. The barricades were demolished and thrown in the harbour.⁶⁴ Police and special constables started arriving; there were 500 after a few days.⁶⁵

Auckland waterside workers favoured an immediate sympathy strike, but waited in the hope that the United Federation's Transport Department would call all affiliated workers out. The Transport Department did not immediately do this; the Auckland and Westport watersiders went out on 29 October.⁶⁶ Two days later the United Federation called all affiliated waterside workers out in Wellington; armed police and special constables began fighting with strikers and their sympathisers, and armed British sailors patrolled the wharves.⁶⁷ The Lyttelton watersiders came out promptly but reluctantly according to the Lyttelton Times: 'Well, it isn't our fault', said one young man. 'We kept on working but the Federation says we have to come out and it's out we go'. The men were urged to stay quiet and sober, and to rely on the judgement of their union executive.⁶⁸ By the end of October 5200 watersiders were out: 1600 in Wellington, 1500 in Auckland, 900

64. LT 25 Oct 1913, 12; 27 Oct 1913, 8.

65. LT 30 Oct 1913, 7, 8.

66. LT 28 Oct 1913, 7; 30 Oct 1913, 6, 7.

67. LT 31 Oct 1913, 6, 7. H. Roth, Trade Unions in New Zealand, 38.

68. LT 31 Oct 1913, 7, 8.

at Lyttelton, 900 at Port Chalmers, and 150 each at Westport and Greymouth.⁶⁹

The Lyttelton Strike Committee resolved to allow basic 'necessaries of life' to be carried. In some cases strikers overturned this decision when pickets attempted to enforce it. The UFL proposed a return to work on the old agreement, pending a conference; the employers upped their demands and called for registration under the 1894 Act, which would have outlawed strikes and, effectively, direct action. The North Canterbury Farmers' Union began to organise strikebreakers. Lyttelton watersiders felt that the strike was simply a fight that had to be won. Fred 'Lurch, the chairman of the Strike Committee, told a large crowd in Victoria Square that the strike was

a contest between one class and another. Had I been consulted before the strike, I should have debated the question whether the step would be right or wrong. But now that the strike has taken place I take my side with my class and ask no questions. You never hear of the employing class dying of starvation in the streets. It is only the worker; so let us not ask the reason of the strike, but take our place and fight the matter out.⁷⁰

The unions of Christchurch agreed. Hiram Hunter spoke to that Saturday night meeting; he had just come from the largest meeting of drivers ever held in Christchurch. They had resolved to call a voluntary levy, and not to handle goods unloaded by strikebreakers or goods destined for the wharf. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers unanimously resolved to give moral and financial support. The General Labourers' Union placed itself

69. LT 1 Nov 1911, 11. See the Lyttelton Times, passim, for accounts of the progress of the strike, and also relevant union records.

70. LT 3 Nov 1913, 8.

in the hands of the Strike Committee and voted a voluntary levy of 5% of wages. A suggestion that, if special constables and strikebreakers were introduced, the Union should 'take a weeks holidays to go and see these freaks' was lost; like most unions, the Labourers' supported the strike but did not intend to over-commit its strength.⁷¹ The Moulders' Union voted a levy of a shilling per week; the Boilermakers levied each member two shillings. The Tailoresses and Pressers voted sympathy, and £10: they also struck a weekly levy of one shilling; the Tailoring Trades Union was largely composed of better-paid male workers and voted to give all funds over £100. The Operative Bootmakers, amid 'general applause' resolved to ballot members on a donation of £150. The membership carried this proposal by 268 to 50. Several members of this union accepted employment as special constables and were 'written to intimating that we condemn their conduct as being subversive of the principles of unionism'.⁷² The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners voted a voluntary levy of one shilling. This society had a vocal minority opposed to the strike; Ted Howard had addressed the meeting and

Bro Moody here pointed out that whereas the General Labourers' Union was an irresponsible Union, the ASCJ was a Branch of a Large Body and any action of this Branch would have an effect on others.⁷³

But not many workers in Christchurch shared such attitudes.

Jimmy Thorn returned from Britain the day the strike began and remarked that, when he left New Zealand in 1909,

not a dozen men could have been found to advocate a strike as a definite policy in settling an industrial dispute. They were all arbitrationists then. Now it was changed. Thousands of men in New Zealand were

71. GLU 11 Nov 1913.

72. GB 26 Nov 1913.

73. ASCJ 18 Nov 1913.

prepared to rely on the strength of their own combination, and on methods to which every man in the community must subscribe when liberties were encroached on.⁷⁴

The only major union to refuse all support to the strike was the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants; it had rejected affiliation with the UFL a short time before the strike began. Railway servants had lost their pension rights by taking part in a boycott in 1890 and perhaps did not wish to repeat the experience. The Society's special agreement with the Government would have been lost if the ASRS had affiliated to any other Labour body. Some Christchurch railway workers were in sympathy with the strike, and resented the orders from the ASRS to remain at work.⁷⁵

A conference was held between representatives of the employers and the Federation on 4 November. The Federation offered further concessions: a return to work with penalties for further striking at the ports, and reinstatement of the Huntly union officials only if an independent tribunal found victimisation had occurred. The conference lasted precisely five minutes. The employers continued to demand registration under the 1894 Act. The Wellington watersiders had voted by 1048 to 88 to cancel their registration in 1911. Massey chaired this conference; in the opinion of the Federation delegates he was so biased that 'he ought to leave the presidential chair and take his place among the employers'.⁷⁶ The suggestion that the dispute should be referred to the Arbitration Court was as unpopular among the workers in Christchurch as elsewhere. The Court was 'in greater disfavour with the workers

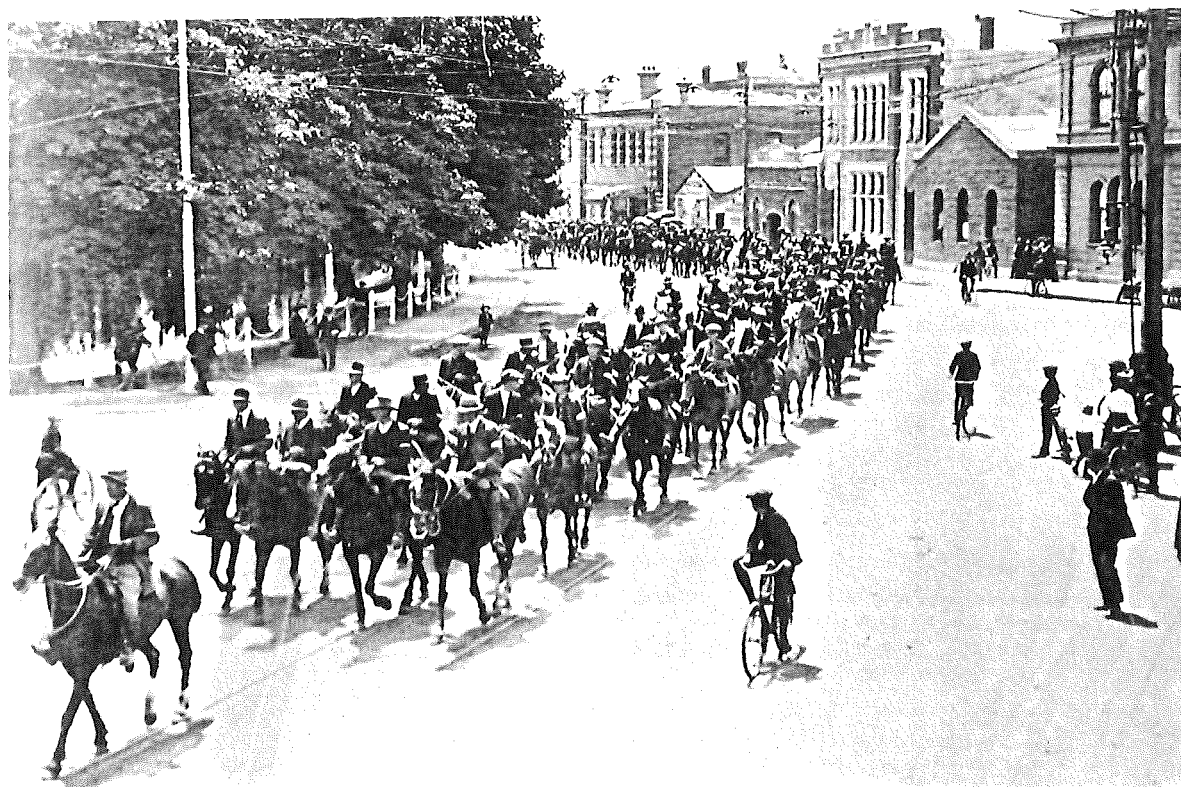
74. LT 3 Nov 1913, 8-9.

75. LT 5 Nov 1913, 8; 18 Nov 1913, 6.

76. Ibid, 8, 9.

The Great Strike; two views of specials riding at dawn to open the wharves at Lyttelton; top, in Cashel St; bottom, in Oxford Tce. The strikers had 24 hours' warning of the supposedly secret operation and chose to stay in bed, ignoring the provocation.

- Canterbury Times 3 Dec 1913, 37.
Weekly Press 3 Dec 1913, 29.



now than ever it was before'. When the North Canterbury Farmers' Union advocated the employers' terms, the Lyttelton Waterside Workers' Union contrasted the farmers' 'new-found regard for arbitration' with 'the antagonism with which they met the system when it was proposed to apply it to them' in 1908. The Waterside Workers' Union further asked:

if arbitration fails workers in matters upon which politicians are diffident to legislate, is it any wonder that confidence in the scheme is supplanted by criticism? And when arbitration fails, what other means can be adopted to protect the workers' interests but the strike, particularly when a Government is in power whose only effort at labour legislation has been along the lines of coercion and repression?

The manifesto ended with an

appeal to the workers to be loyal to their class and to show their reprobation of a Government whose law and order is a semi-military display of batons and firearms, and whose whole attitude towards a constitutional and peacefully-conducted strike has been destitute of any sense of moral purpose in the world and empty of any understanding of the facts of the workers' lives.

A response to this appeal will ensure victory, and, what is essential to greatness in any country, an independent and self-reliant working class.⁷⁷

After a week on strike, Lyttelton watersiders' families began to feel the pinch. Watersiders' wives sought washing, cleaning, and mending work. The Strike Committee had organised billeting for the families of strikers, but this was used only when absolutely necessary; it was most important that the strikers and their families kept their independence. The Committee organised concerts and other entertainments, and the pickets kept strikers out of the pubs.⁷⁸ Donations of goods and money came in from all over Canterbury; the secretary of the Strike Committee told

77. Ibid, 10, 11.

78. LT 6 Nov 1913, 6, 7; 7 Nov 1913, 8, 9.

of a baker offering cheap bread, and one person giving him a £1 coin in the street. Fishing became a very popular, and fruitful, source of food. A meeting of women at Lyttelton, presumably including many strikers' wives, was addressed by Elizabeth McCombs and Ada Wells, and voted its sympathy to the Wellington strike leaders who had been arrested for sedition.^{79.}

Strikebreakers did not start at Lyttelton until 18 November, nearly three weeks after they had been put on at Wellington. Seamen had been doing cargo-handling at Lyttelton; in one instance, seamen explained to the pickets that they could not break their articles, which required them to do such work if called on. A lone police officer then asked the pickets to move down the shore end of the wharf and was immediately obeyed.^{80.} This sort of disciplined behaviour was characteristic of the Lyttelton strikers and their supporters. Whereas there was much disorder on the Wellington and Auckland wharves, only once did the Lyttelton strikers get aggressive. They tried to put coal-trucks into the harbour, and threw a strikebreaker in as well. Fred Lurch and Paddy Webb restrained them from further action of this sort. The Mayor of Christchurch, Henry Holland, blamed this minor outburst for the introduction of special constables, but James Thorn pointed out that 2000 batons had been ordered a week before the disturbance.^{81.} Fifteen hundred special constables were sworn in a few days later.^{82.} Clearly the employers were intending to force the wharves open.

79. Elizabeth McCombs, whose husband was James McCombs, was active in temperance causes; Ada Wells was very active in the anti-militarist movement.

80. LT 18 Nov 1913, 6.

81. LT 19 Nov 1913, 8, 9.

82. LT 22 Nov 1913, 11.

Many unions apart from the watersiders had come out in Wellington and Auckland. Almost all Christchurch unions stayed in work but donated money to the strikers; the Drivers Union was an exception and declared a strike on 23 November. This was an extension of their black ban on strikebreaking goods. The Social Democratic Councillors were condemned by the Mayor for having incited the Council's drivers to strike.⁸³ Foundry workers at two large city foundries - P & D Duncan and Booth, Macdonald, which together employed 300 workers - were laid off. Duncan's claimed that the reason was that managerial staff had become special constables; Booth Macdonald said that they had no orders.⁸⁴ It may be more likely that these employers were trying a lockout to bring pressure on the strikers.

The special constables, 1100 in number, rode on Lyttelton in the early morning of 25 November. It was intended to be a secret operation but the strikers had 24 hours' notice of their arrival. The strikers decided to offer no resistance, and stayed in bed. By this time 274 strikebreakers were working the wharves. The specials took over the watersiders' hall and spent the time patrolling the streets; 32 Lyttelton business people demanded that they be immediately withdrawn as 'an un-warrantable interference with the rights of the citizens of Lyttelton'. The shopkeepers' demand was not met; on the suggestion of the Strike Committee, they refused to serve specials.⁸⁵ The strikers obviously had a lot of public support; this came from a recognition of the justice of their cause and from their disciplined behaviour.

83. LT 25 Nov 1913, 7.

84. LT 24 Nov 1913, 7; 25 Nov 1913, 7.

85. LT 26 Nov 1913, 9; 27 Nov 1913, 7.

By the beginning of December all ports were again busy; there was no shortage of strikebreakers. At Lyttleton special constables were sent back to their farms. Protest meetings continued to show their defiance. 5000 people heard Paddy Webb in Victoria Square; he told the assembled crowd that 'the Government's power was founded on political scabbery, and it was only to be expected that it would use industrial scabbery to retain its power'. A voice warned him to watch what he said or he would end up in jail. 'Idon't care', said Webb; 'I will be in good company'. The members of the Christchurch Strike Committee - Fred Ellis, James Thorn, Ted Howard, Fred Lurch, Hiram Hunter, James McCombs, and Dan Sullivan were unsuccessfully prosecuted for libel as a result of an article in the Strike Bulletin.⁸⁶ The Strike Committee continued to receive donations from individuals and factory collections; a landowner made available a paddock in May's Road, Papanui, and a camp for younger unmarried strikers, chiefly seamen and firemen with no money, was set up there. A Waiatu farmer sent in ten tons of potatoes; plenty of milk and bread was also coming in.⁸⁷ After five weeks and no surrender, the strikers were making plans for Christmas. Fred Lurch reported that

We have organised a Christmas Hamper Committee, and so far we have been offered a number of fowls, Christmas cake, lollies, plum pudding, and so on. The strikers are going to have a real good old Christmas. It is many years since the workers had an employers' Christmas, no work and plenty to eat. The store in town is now well stocked and the strikers living in town are enabled to get their stores without any trouble.⁸⁸

Seventy-two men were in camp at May's Road; the only thing they

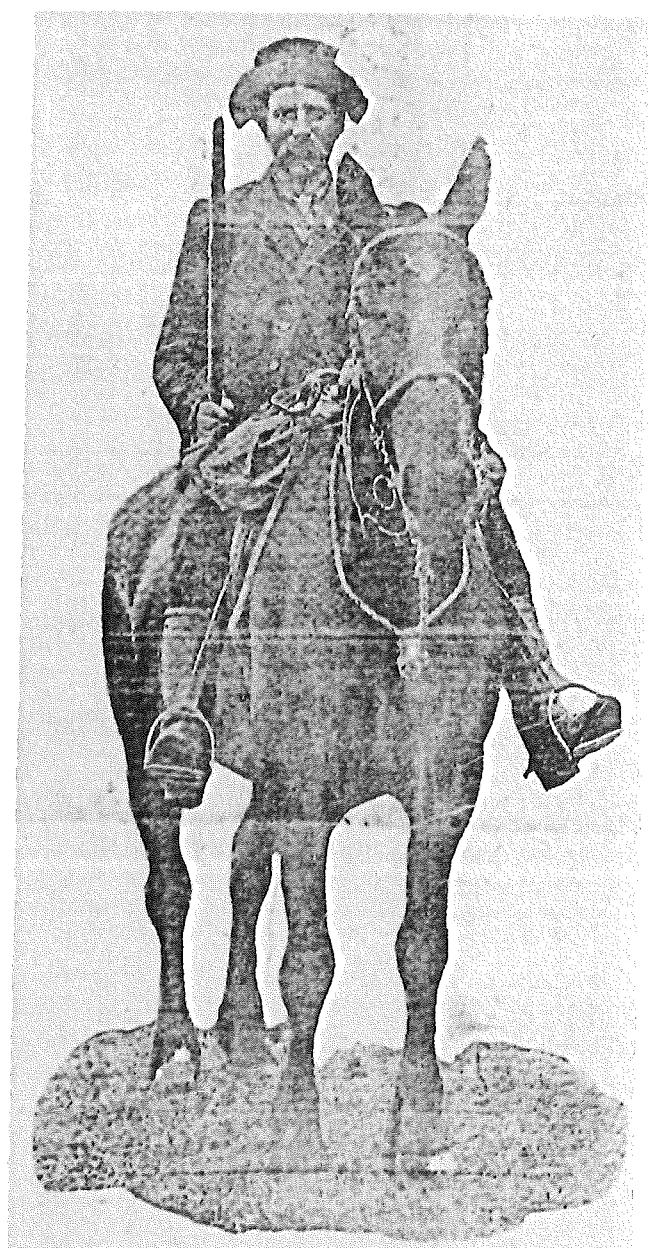
86. LT 1 Dec 1913, 7. 'Political scabbery' referred to the fact that the votes of some renegade Liberal MPs had been necessary to put Reform into power. LT 2 Dec 1913, 7; 3 Dec 1913, 9.
 87. LT 4 Dec 1913, 7; 5 Dec 1913, 7, 6 Dec 1913, 11.
 88. LT 6 Dec 1913, 11.

The Great Strike: a Christmas Party for strikers' children, held at Socialist Hall.

- Canterbury Times 31 Dec 1913, 37.

How the Maoriland Worker saw the specials: 'Peace on Earth and Goodwill?'

- Maoriland Worker 24 Dec 1913, 1.



lacked was tobacco. People living near the camp gave them 'many kindnesses', including jam, cake, milk, and a gramophone.^{89.}

The strikers did not lack for public support, in Christchurch at least. They were not starved back to work; it was the abundance of strikebreakers that defeated them and a Supreme Court ruling that outlawed donations from other unions. In mid-December the UFL began negotiations with employers; Massey presided. The terms were a return to work and open entry to the arbitration unions which had been formed on the wharves. On these terms the strike was called off.^{90.} It was a defeat for the United Federation of Labour, but it was no disgrace. If nothing else had been achieved, the solidarity of the workers - and their support in the population at large, in Christchurch - was such as had never been seen before. In the months after the strike, too, militant unions were able to salvage some of their organisation. There was an immediate political victory gained through the strike, as well, when the Social Democratic Party gained the Lyttelton seat in Parliament.

The seat of Lyttelton became vacant when George Laurenson, the incumbent MP, died suddenly during the strike. Laurenson had been one of the most left-wing of the Liberal Party; on his death he was eulogised by unions and strikers. He was 'amongst the few men in Parliament who at the present time were brave enough to stand up on a platform on behalf of Labour'. A thousand striking watersiders led Laurenson's funeral cortage to the

89. LT 8 Dec 1913, 7; 10 Dec 1913, 10.

90. LT 18 Dec 1913, 17.

grave in Wellington.^{91.}

Even if there had been no strike, the Social Democrats could well have inherited Laurenson's seat; he had been so radical in his views that no labour or socialist candidate ever stood against him during his lifetime. Walter Thomas Mills, in opening the SDP campaign, claimed Laurenson as a supporter, not only of the strike, but also of the SDP.^{92.}

There were five candidates for the seat. The official Liberal candidate was James Laurenson, brother of the deceased; however, he had the disadvantage of being vice-president of the Canterbury Employers' Association and was also active in the Ironmasters' Association as a foundry-owner. Reform chose one M. J. Miller to represent its interests, and there were two independent Liberals, one of whom was the well-known Dr. Henry Thacker. The Social Democratic candidate was James McCombs; he had once been a radical Liberal, but broke with that party some years before 1913. He had stood in Christchurch East as an Independent in 1908, and as an Independent Liberal-Labour candidate in Avon in 1911, where he ran the official Liberal a close second. He beat Henry Voyce of the Waterside Workers' Union and Dan Sullivan in a selection contest conducted among all party members in the electorate. As a high-profile prohibitionist with a long record of involvement in progressive causes, McCombs was better known among the public at large than the two union activists.^{93.}

91. James Thorn, LT 20 Nov 1913, 2; 24 Nov 1913, 5.

92. LT 26 Nov 1913, 11.

93. LT 27 Nov 1913, 7; Plumridge 'Labour in Christchurch' pp47-50.

From the beginning the Social Democratic Party regarded the by-election as part of the labour movement's battle in the strike. The Government may have had similar views; it issued the writs for the by-election immediately Laurensen died and therefore closed the rolls without notice. A thousand electors were thereby disenfranchised.⁹⁴.

McCombs was favoured to win from the outset. The Reform candidate opened his campaign in Woolston, home of the country's first and strongest SDP branch. The hall was overcrowded; '90 per cent of the audience were men - working men with lusty voices'. When he began to speak, he got 'What about the rolls?' When he mentioned Laurensen, he got 'Turncoat' and cheers for Paddy Webb and Jimmy McCombs. David Jones, organiser for the North Canterbury Farmers' Union, was present and got given 'Three groans for Davey Jones' and the singing of We'll hang Bill Massey on a sour apple tree. The meeting closed early; a vote of no confidence in Miller was carried with only four dissenters.⁹⁵.

When McCombs spoke he also drew large crowds. He campaigned heavily on the strike issue, but also on the SDP platform. He advocated such policies as the reform of the Arbitration Court with compulsory preference and a statutory minimum wage; an increased land tax and lower customs duties; the nationalisation of highly protected industries such as the boot trade; the abolition of compulsory military training; and the introduction of proportional representation. Much of the publicity work for his campaign was done by the Women's Social Democratic Committee, directed

94. LT 27 Nov 1913, 7; 29 Nov 1913, 10; 8 Dec 1913, 10.

95. LT 29 Nov 1913, 13.

by Elizabeth Taylor, widow of Tommy Taylor. Her 'commitment to the new party must have won the hearts of many of Tommy Taylor's old supporters'.⁹⁶.

James Laurenson's policies were not very different from those of the SDP. He supported conscription and was less radical on taxation, but had the same ideas on arbitration as McCombs. He never won a vote of confidence from any of his meetings, but his audiences were a good deal friendlier than those Miller got. The Liberal Party gave him little support; either the national hierarchy of the party took the seat for granted, or it had already resigned itself to losing to the Social Democrats. No national figures in the Liberal Party spoke in Laurenson's support; McCombs had all the chief figures of the UFL and the SDP, the Christchurch labour leaders, and the four Labour MPs campaigning for him. McCombs even took his campaign to the central city; he got 4000 people at a Saturday night meeting in Victoria Square.⁹⁷.

The real casualty of the first ballot was the Liberal Party. Laurenson only won 922 votes; the two independent Liberals got 360 between them. The Reform candidate won 1560 votes; McCombs easily topped the poll with 2075. McCombs was carried shoulder-high from the Lyttelton Courthouse to the railway station. At the station he and Jimmy Thorn tried to speak to the crowd and the special constables, who were out in force, manhandled them, threatened them with their batons, and tried to arrest Thorn. One

96. LT 2 Dec 1913, 9; E. W. Plumridge 'A Necessary but not Sufficient Condition', 140.

97. LT 8 Dec 1913, 10.

special took to a woman in the crowd with his whip. The situation was defused by the regular police, who gave protection to the Social Democrats.^{98.}

The second ballot was between Reform and the Social Democrats, McCombs won, 2628 to 2402.^{99.} McCombs only got 553 votes more than in the first round; Miller picked up almost a thousand. Many who voted Liberal in the first round must have gone to Reform in the second;^{100.} voting was getting polarised into Labour and anti-Labour. It would take twenty years for this process to be more or less complete throughout the country.

By any standards, 1913 had been a remarkable year for the labour movement in New Zealand. A fair measure of organisational unity had been achieved. This had borne immediate fruit in the return of two Social Democrats to Parliament; Paddy Webb had won Grey in July, and was joined by McCombs in December. Christchurch and the West Coast had become the most united labour areas in the country; this city was known as the 'home of militant anti-militarism and socialist activity'.^{101.} Yet this progress to unity had taken place amid, and indeed been encouraged by, a sustained attack by employers on militant unionism. This attack had been developing for years; in 1913 it moved from fights over the control of the workplace to the streets of New Zealand's port and mining areas. After the defeat of the Great Strike, the battle for control of the workplace carried on.

98. LT 10 Dec 1913, 9.

99. LT 17 Dec 1913, 8.

100. This was the opinion of the Maoriland Worker, 24 Dec 1913.

101. MW 12 Aug 1914, 12.

III. After The Strike: December 1913 - August 1914

A. The Workplace. On the wharves, work had been in full swing for some weeks before the strike was declared off; new unions had been set up by the employers and registered under the Arbitration Act. At Lyttelton, the strikers were not at first keen to join the new Wharf Labourers' Union. In any case, there were a number of restrictions on their doing so. A prospective member was required to be working on the wharf before being eligible to join the union; this rule guaranteed that no striker would get work ahead of a strikebreaker. Written applications for membership were required; these included a promise to 'adhere to the principles of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act'. The rules also provided that 'Any member deemed by the executive of the Union to be opposed to the principles of the Act may be expelled from the Union by a ballot of the members present at a meeting specially called for the purpose'. Henry Voyce, the president of the strikers' union, felt there was 'very little doubt that the port strikers would gladly return to work on the wharves if they could do so without treachery to their organisation, but the terms of the new Union are apparently too bitter a pill for them to swallow'.

Jimmy McCombs tried to mediate between the two unions. The strikebreaking union resolved that McCombs not be admitted to any of its meetings; 'if he wishes to address members of this Union he should hire a hall and invite us to meet him'. The employers told McCombs that the reason for restricting union membership was to avoid taking on more watersiders than there was work for. This was not usually a consideration; the normal requirement of the

arbitration law was that unions should be open to all workers in the trade who were 'of good character and sober habits'.

McCombs got rather irate at the reception and said the employers were intending to permanently deny employment to hundreds of strikers. No doubt he was correct.¹⁰².

The strikers had no choice but to apply for work and union membership on the employers' terms. This, however, did not rule out an attempt to later take the arbitrationist union over by force of numbers; the miners at Huntly had done this early in 1913, after their Red Federation union had been supplanted by an arbitrationist organisation.

Two days before Christmas four hundred ex-strikers had their names down for work on the wharf. Less than half of them expected to be taken on immediately.¹⁰³. Over the Christmas period there was a base figure of 250 jobs reserved for strikebreakers; between 100 and 130 ex-strikers were also taken on as work required. Some of the strikers in camp at May's Road declared that they would leave the country rather than join the new union; others of them took farm work. At the end of December there were still 200 ex-strikers excluded from joining the new union; the union did not intend to register its agreement with the Arbitration Court, so there was no redress on its membership rules.¹⁰⁴. Respect for the arbitration laws was very selective on the part of employers' organisations.

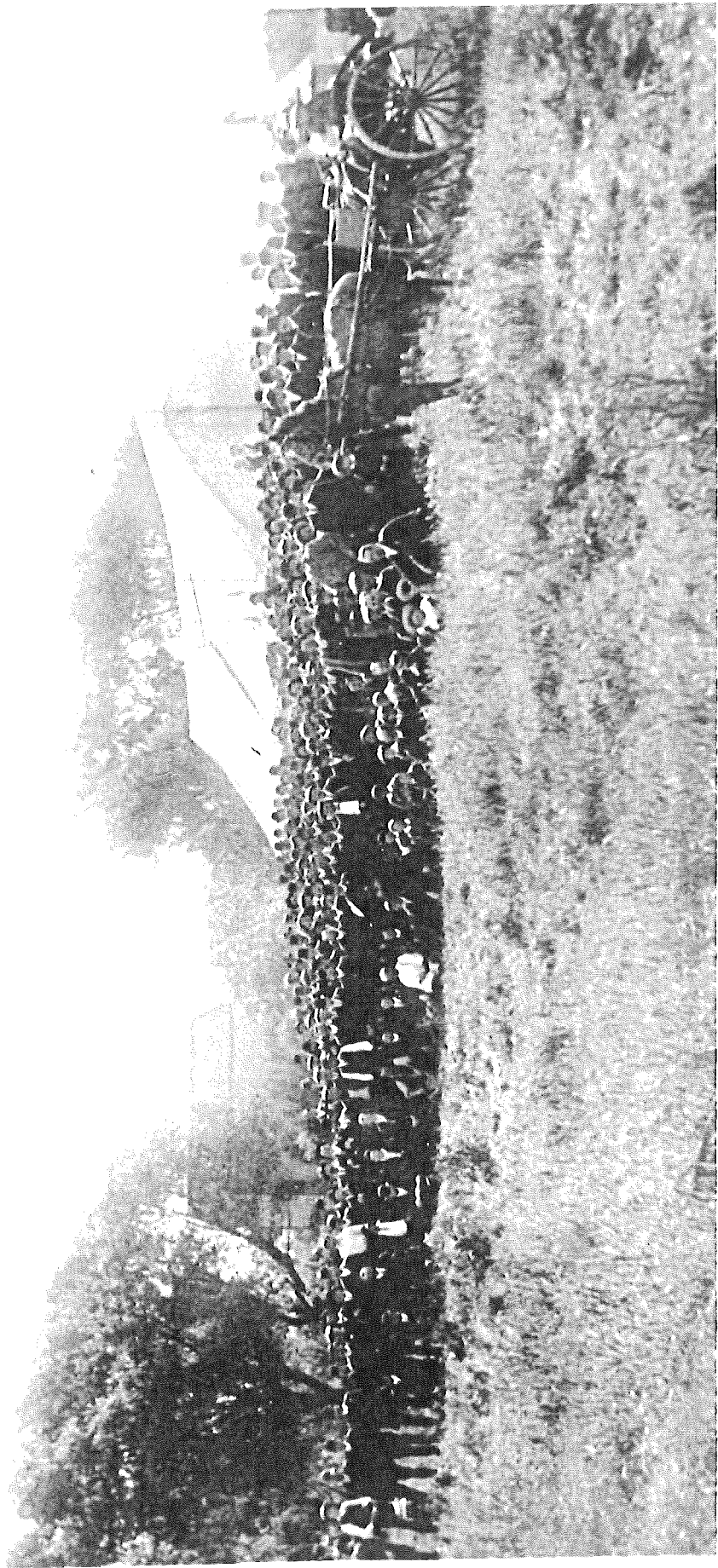
102. LT 23 Dec 1913, 7, 8.

103. LT 24 Dec 1913, 10.

104. LT 30 Dec 1913, 7.

The Great Strike: strikers' camp at May's Rd, Papanui, mostly occupied by young unmarried strikers. The land was lent by a local resident and the neighbours gave the strikers 'many kindnesses'.

- Hocken Library, J.T. Paul Papers.



The strikebreaking union was forced to reverse its policy and apply for registration of its rules and agreement, when the old strikers' union threatened to get in first and register itself. This would have made the strikers' union's conditions the norm; the employers were, for a change, having their attempts to control the workplace disrupted by manipulation of the arbitration laws.¹⁰⁵ The Department of Labour refused to register the old union on the grounds that its members could 'conveniently belong' to the other union, but the strikebreakers' union was only acceptable to the Department if it changed its rules to allow open entry. The Department forced the strikebreakers' union to comply in a tersely-worded telegram setting out the law. It took six days for the union to decide to obey the arbitration law which it was profess- edly so enthusiastic about.¹⁰⁶ J. B. Clough, the strikebreaking union president, resigned.

Within two days of the union's conforming to the law, it had over 600 members, of whom a majority were ex-strikers. But the strikebreakers had left an agreement, filed in the Arbitration Court, which included a preference clause operative 'only so long as the Union shall not be associated in any way with any other industrial union or trade union or association of such unions or association of other workers'. By this clause the Wharf Labourers' Union was forbidden to join the UFL, the Trades Council, or any federation of waterside workers.¹⁰⁷ This clause, however, did not last. A motion of protest at the agreement and the procedure of its filing was carried on the motion of Henry Voyce; Jimmy McCombs

105. LT 1 Jan 1914, 8.

106. LT 2 Jan 1914, 8; 6 Jan 1914, 8.

107. LT 8 Jan 1914, 8.

was invited to address the union on the subject, and a committee was set up to consider the matter.¹⁰⁸ A conference was called with the employers at the end of February, but many of the ex-strikers were getting annoyed. Strikebreakers had been given a guarantee of £2 10 a week for three months and preference over ex-strikers to induce them to stay on; 150 jobs were set aside for them. This amounted to victimisation of strikers. The ex-strikers staged a number of wildcat strikes in the first fortnight of March to get equal preference, but did not succeed.¹⁰⁹ The union met with a number of local MPs - James McCombs and the Liberals Leonard Isitt, Harry Ell, and Thomas Davey - who promised to do what they could. The employers' eventual reply to the MPs conceded without admitting as much; they agreed to a preference order of strikebreakers, married ex-strikers, and single ex-strikers. Since most unmarried ex-strikers had left the port, the union had more or less got what it wanted.¹¹⁰

In other ports, especially Wellington and Auckland, many more ex-strikers found difficulty in getting work again. These were still some hundreds unemployed by mid-April.¹¹¹ Although ex-strikers captured the unions in other ports, ill-feeling between ex-strikers and strikebreakers often exploded into fistfights and dropping loads. At Lyttelton, expression of such ill-feeling was limited to workers eating dinner in separate places.¹¹²

The strikers in Lyttelton had managed to take back the union,

- 108. LT 9 Jan 1914, 7; 13 Jan 1914, 7.
- 109. LT 25 Feb 1914, 12; 9 Mar 1914, 3.
- 110. LT 17 Mar 1914, 5; 7 Apr 1914, 5.
- 111. LT 15 Apr 1914, 12.
- 112. LT 12 May 1914, 11.

to organise themselves with something of the militancy of previous years. Although the employers had had little difficulty in finding strikebreakers, keeping them on was another matter. Few of them came from Lyttelton, whereas most of the strikers were locals and were settled in the area. This enabled the strikers to keep their livelihood after the strike had been broken. Watersiders in Auckland and Wellington were a more mobile group, and the strikebreakers tended to stay on longer.

Drivers had been the only other workers in Christchurch to go out during the strike. Employers set up a rival union, the Christchurch Horse and Commercial Motor-Car Drivers' Union, on the ground that the old one had taken part in the strike and therefore automatically cancelled its registration. Hiram Hunter protested that no proof had been offered that the Drivers' Union had struck; the union had not been convicted of striking, and therefore the Department of Labour had no reason to register the new union.¹¹³ The Arbitration Court gave an award to the new union in January 1914, however, and exempted livery-stable workers, delivery-car drivers, and taxi drivers from its protection precisely because they had taken part in the strike.¹¹⁴ The old Drivers' Union kept its 1913 award and was not seriously challenged by the rival body: their respective memberships were 343 and 198 in March 1915. The Drivers' Union got a new award in 1916; the Court refused to make any new award for the strikebreaking union.¹¹⁵

For other Christchurch unions, which had not declared a

113. LT 31 Dec 1913, 12.

114. LT 17 Jan 1914, 9.

115. DoL report AJHR H-11A, 1915; BoA vol XIII, 1916.

strike, things went on much as before. The Tramway Workers' Union again tried to resolve its longstanding grievances against the Tramway Board, by going through the arbitration system. The union claimed a wage rise of 1½d per hour; the Board offered a farthing. The union also proposed more regular shifts, with at least ten hours off between shifts, and no broken time on Sundays.¹¹⁶ The union's assessors at the Conciliation Council refused to accept the Board's proposals, and the case went to the Arbitration Court. The case was not resolved in 1914; in 1915 the Court brought down an award which gave a slight increase in wages, and did not improve other conditions at all.¹¹⁷ Agricultural workers employed in threshing-mills applied to the Court for a substantial wage rise; the Court accepted the employers' figure of a slight increase but did provide for a workers' representative at each mill to settle minor disputes.¹¹⁸ The Carpenters and Joiners got a rise from the Court of 1½d per hour, taking them to 1'6 per hour. Piecework was banned in the new award; previously joinery factories had been able to operate on piecework.¹¹⁹ Woollen Mill workers and freezing works employees (who included all workers apart from slaughtermen) also received wage rises, the latter in direct conference with employers. The woollen workers got less than they had claimed; men were given a wage of £2 8 per week and women, 27'6. A weekly wage of 30 shillings for women had been demanded.¹²⁰

Unemployment was promising to be severe throughout 1914. In March, Ted Howard estimated there were 200 unemployed men in

116. LT 9 Apr 1914, 5.

117. BoA XVI, 1915, 43.

118. LT 13 May 1914, 5; BoA, Vol XV, 1914, 399.

119. BoA XV, 1914, 385.

120. LT 16 Mar 1914, 9; 16 Jul 1914, 14.

the city, a high figure for the time of year. Most were general labourers, and many had come in from the country as farm work lessened. It was expected that the winter of 1914 would be the worst for years. The Department of Labour attempted to find work for the city's unemployed in Taranaki and Gisborne; this was not successful. Twenty were sent to roadmaking, and another twenty to the Ross goldmine. There was nothing else available.¹²¹ The Lyttelton Times reported 'very bitter complaints against the Government, and its apathy is compared with the sympathetic energy shown in these times of slackness by the Liberal Government'.¹²² The coming of war immediately made things much worse.

The months after the breaking of the Great Strike saw an uneven pattern in relations between employers and workers. Many groups of workers continued to receive little satisfaction from the Arbitration Court, although some improvements were gained. On the waterfront, the arbitration unions were speedily taken over by the former strikers; arbitration law could still be used to benefit union organisation. The year of 1914 brought a general slump in trade. With high unemployment and continued low wages, working class protest was smouldering. The outbreak of war changed the environment, however. Protest was also modified by a concentration on parliamentary organisation. The failure of the strike had strengthened the position of those who favoured parliamentary organisation, at least as far as means were concerned, if not ultimate aims.

B. The UFL and the SDP. The immediate effect of the Great

121. LT 17 Mar 1914, 6; 8 Apr 1914, 9; 6 May 1914, 14.

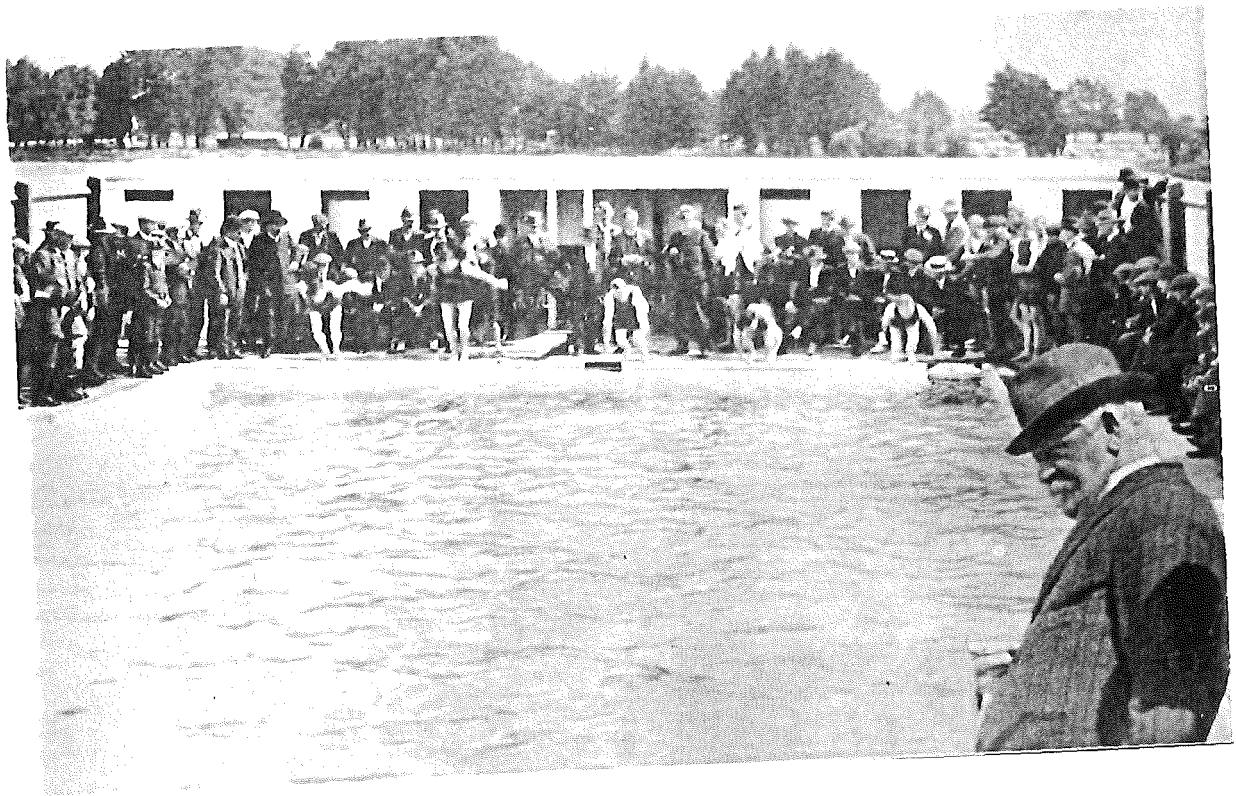
122. LT 25 Jul 1914, 14.

The Lyttelton By-Election, December 1913, first ballot.
Left; a group of Social Democrats getting the vote out;
W.T. Mills is the short one with side-whiskers. Right; Jim
McCullough (brother of Jack and a Christchurch City Councillor)
assisting a voter.

- Weekly Press 17 Dec 1913, 32.

Paternalism was not often a tool of employers before 1914. The
Canterbury Frozen Meat Company was an exception when it provided
a swimming pool in 1914 at its Belfast works in 'recognition of
the loyalty of the company's permanent employees'. Most of
these permanent employees had been taken on in February 1913 as
strikebreakers.

- Canterbury Times 11 Feb 1914, 37.



Strike on the Federation and the SDP was to leave them both short of money. A month before the strike ended, Mills circularised all SDP branches that

Mr. Fraser is in jail in connection with the strike. At his request I am doing his work as secretary-Treasurer....There is very much work in connection with this office which needs immediate attention. The Treasury is entirely without funds....Money has been provided for printing some literature. It is of the most vital importance that this literature should be sent out and that a large correspondence on behalf of the body should at once be undertaken. Without a considerable sum of money it will be impossible....I am myself working at this time without salary and will do so as long as I possibly can....Cannot you forward at once some money...¹²³.

The UFL was so broke that Semple had to go to Australia to borrow £1000. He got it from the Australian Workers' Union.¹²⁴.

Despite its defiant stand at the end of the strike, the United Federation had been badly weakened. As well as having lost a great deal of money, the UFL lost the confidence of many unions, at least to some extent. Few unions seceded,¹²⁵ but many expressed misgivings about the form of organisation that had been adopted. The Auckland Secretaries' Association, a local federation of union officials, called a conference of unions affiliated to the arbitration system. This conference, which met in April 1914, urged the UFL to call a national conference of all unions to decide on a common line of political action.¹²⁶ This conference opened in July, with about a hundred delegates present and served as the UFL's annual conference. The Lyttelton Times reported a

123. Circular, 18 Nov 1913, McCarthy X. Mills had gone over to the SDP after the ULP ran out of money to pay him.

124. JTP 982/5, cutting from Australian Worker 5 Feb 1914.

125. The Auckland Drivers' Union did; LT 11 Mar 1914, 10; the Dunedin Drivers' Union considered it. 4 May 1914, 10.

126. LT 15 Apr 1914, 9; 17 Apr 1914, 9.

feeling of gloom; 'a sense of depression is generally the condition of affairs in the ranks of labour'.^{127.}

The conference adopted a new preamble for the Federation constitution. Instead of the plan to 'organise systematically and scientifically upon an industrial union basis, in order to assist the overthrow of the capitalist system', the preamble of the Australian Federation of Labour was taken. This began with reference to the tendency 'more and more to the complete control of the means of production by powerful groups of capitalists with the consequent complete dependence of the community upon these few'. Its principal clause stated

Therefore it is expedient and necessary that there should be a closing-up of the ranks of Labour, irrespective of the industry in which the workers are engaged or the country in which they dwell, in order that the workers may present a united front to the capitalists, and by the power of concerted and well-considered action, wage successfully the battle of humanity against the power of wealth.^{128.}

In that it did not specifically mention industrial unionism, which was a synonym for direct action, this preamble was seen as more moderate than its predecessor. Some delegates called the new formula 'reactionary'; Dan Sullivan, however, believed that the 'rank and file could not understand the original preamble and simply turned it down. There was no possibility of uniting them on that preamble'. Bob Semple 'was prepared to concede a good deal for the sake of unity'. The preamble was adopted, and Dan Sullivan was elected president of the Federation.^{129.} The remainder of the 1913 constitution was reaffirmed.

127. LT 8 Jul 1914, 4.

128. MW 15 Jul 1914, 4.

129. Ibid.

If the industrial wing of the movement was in the doldrums - the Canterbury TLC had no meetings between February and July 1914 - the political wing was doing very well on the ground in Christchurch. The party began a major organising effort in all suburbs of Christchurch after the Great Strike; special emphasis was put on getting voters enrolled, in case the Government called a snap election. James Thorn, the SDP's South Island organiser also organised branches in Rangiora, Kaiapoi, and East Oxford.¹³⁰ Public meetings were the usual means of attracting new members; these were held in the evenings and during factory dinner hours. A mass meeting of 2000 was addressed by Bob Semple at Easter; he lost his voice denouncing 'the gang of political bushrangers who at present infest the Treasury benches'. The Socialist Party's orchestra provided music for this meeting.¹³¹ Five hundred voters were put on the rolls by the party in one Saturday afternoon's work in the Square.¹³² Jimmy Thorn gave a report of progress to the Maoriland Worker: a 'large and sympathetic audience' attended an open-air meeting in Sydenham Park on a Sunday afternoon and 'four new members were secured, one of whom has already induced another thirty to join'. Thorn himself had three good meetings at Marshlands, attended by

small farmers who most of them were with us heart and soul. At Lyttelton four dozen 'Maoriland Workers' were sold on the street corner, and at Addington, where there are more Social Democrats to the square inch than in any other part of New Zealand bar Woolston and Rumanga, I had the best of receptions.¹³³

The Maoriland Worker had a circulation figure in Christchurch of 5000; its readership must have been much higher. The Woolston

130. LT 19 Jan 1914, 8; 11 Feb 1914, 9.

131. LT 9 Apr 1914, 9; 13 Apr 1914, 9.

132. LT 14 Apr 1914, 10.

133. MW 1 Apr 1914, 2.

branch of the SDP was becoming renowned for its fortnightly socials, which provided a respectable yet convivial gathering for both men and women.^{134.}

As the municipal elections approached, the Christchurch SDP had some difficulty working out its strategy. The major problem was whether the party should put forward a candidate for the Christchurch Mayoralty. The party's leadership was not willing to do so, on the grounds that even if the Mayoralty was won, there would still be a reactionary majority on the City Council; it was more important to secure a progressive majority on the Council before trying to win the Mayoralty.^{135.}

The party's rank and file had different ideas. Members in the St. Alban's area first made their feelings known at a meeting that was organising for the election in that ward.^{136.} At Bob Semple's Easter meeting in the Colosseum, the 2000 people present unanimously expressed an opinion that the SDP should contest the Mayoralty.^{137.} Robert Spiers was selected by the party for candidacy.^{138.} The Social Democrats campaigned on municipalisation of utilities and on the Council's handling of the Great Strike, especially its calling for special constables.^{139.}

Spiers did surprisingly well in the election; he got 3840 votes, but was well beaten by Henry Holland's 7140. Once again the SDP's chief strength and only councillors came from the

134. MW 14 June 1910, 5; Plumridge 'Labour in Christchurch' pp44-7.

135. LT 24 Feb 1914, 8; 26 Feb 1914, 6.

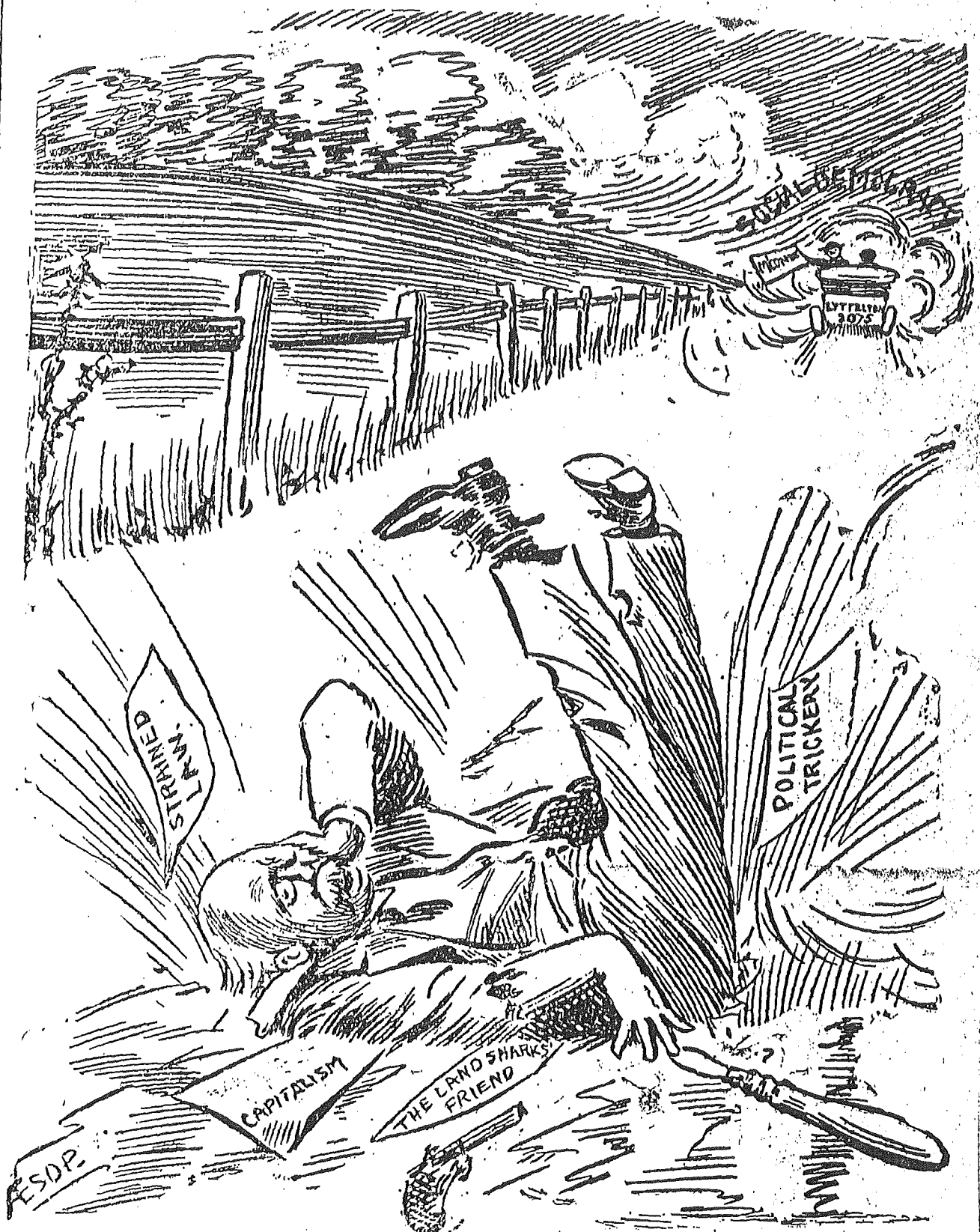
136. LT 2 Apr 1914, 5.

137. LT 13 Apr 1914, 9.

138. LT 16 Apr 1914, 8.

139. LT 22 Apr 1914, 10; 27 Apr 1914, 10.

BADLY BOWLED OVER



"DID ANYTHING HIT ME?"

The Maoriland Worker cheered loudly when Massey's Government came a cropper in the Lyttelton by-election during the Great Strike.

- 17 Dec 1913.

Sydenham ward, where they were unopposed. The somewhat disappointing results were blamed on a low turnout. Since the urban working-class did not form a majority of the voters in any New Zealand city, electoral success depended on attracting voters from other classes.^{133.}

The major issue confronting the Social Democratic Party as the General Election approached was whether an alliance should be made with the Liberal Party. In March 1914 the National Executive of the SDP, on the motion of Hiram Hunter, ruled out any such alliance,^{140.} and feeling within the party in Christchurch was also strongly opposed to making any deals. The argument in favour of making a deal with the Liberals was that the anti-Reform vote should not be split, and the more radical Liberals should be left unchallenged. In Canterbury, if the SDP did not challenge radical Liberals, it would fight only in the Reform strongholds of Ellesmere and Ashburton, as well as in Lyttelton. The Trades Council rejected such proposals as ludicrous, and the National Executive took a similar view.^{141.} The only support the SDP was prepared to give the Liberals was in electorates where 500 Social Democratic Party members could not be found to nominate a candidate - the SDP was in no way prepared to act as a junior partner to the Liberals.^{142.}

The Liberal Party attempted to revive the Liberal-Labour Federation for the election. Forty-two people attended a meeting in Christchurch to this end. A manifesto was issued calling for an end to the sale of crown land, an increased land tax, closer

140. Executive Minutes 11 Mar 1914, McCarthy X; LT 12 Mar 1914, 8.

141. LT 24 Jan 1914, 16; 31 Jan 1914, 16; 13 Mar 1914, 5.

142. LT 24 Mar 1914, 18.

settlement, state development of mineral reserves, a State Bank, free education, pension reform, and reform of the labour laws.¹⁴³ The Social Democrats were not very impressed; they were committed to socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and regarded such liberal reforms as a bare minimum. Moreover, the Liberals had had twenty years of office to enact such reforms and had not done so. James Thorn claimed that of those present at this 'meeting of ancients...at least 20...were SDPeers of an inquiring turn of mind'.¹⁴⁴ But the Liberal Party was still a force to be reckoned with in Christchurch: Ward drew 5000 to a Saturday night meeting in Victoria Square, and when Fred Cooke tried to put an anti-Liberal resolution to the meeting he was greeted with groans and hoots, 'interspersed with inquiries regarding the flying qualities of the red flag'.¹⁴⁵ When Massey spoke in the city, he got the same reception as he had in 1913, and got so fed up he told the audience 'You haven't got the brains of a hen!' To which one interjector replied: 'You have, though!'¹⁴⁶.

The Annual Conference of the SDP reaffirmed its opposition to making any formal arrangement with the Liberal Party, but also resolved that there should be 'no unnecessary splitting of the Progressive vote by the running of candidates where the Party had only a small chance of success'. Candidate selection was centralised in the hands of the National Executive.¹⁴⁷ The party was aiming for the balance of power in Parliament; presumably it

143. LT 26 Mar 1914, 9.

144. MW 1 Apr 1914, 2.

145. LT 5 May 1914, 7.

146. MW 22 Jul 1914, 2.

147. LT 21 Jul 1914, 10.

intended to then dictate terms to the Liberal Party for a coalition.^{148.}

IV. The Coming of War: August - December 1914.

The First World War brought a great deal of hardship to the working class in Christchurch. There was an immediate and sharp rise in unemployment; prices began to rise fast, and the cost of living increased dramatically throughout the war years. If it was possible, the government and the ruling class generally became even less tolerant of socialist doctrines and other forms of dissent than they had been in 1913.

Radicals within the labour movement adopted a hard line of opposition to the war from the beginning. The weeks that war began, the Maoriland Worker stated that

despite all the tall talk of "patriotism" "loyalty" "fatherland" and the like, the propelling force back of the whole bloody and damnable conspiracy is DIVIDENDS, DIVIDENDS, DIVIDENDS!.....Would that the workers were organised sufficiently to stop this mad murder-mongering now!.....The workers of New Zealand have surely had their lesson well learned through the aid of the jingoistic efforts of boosted patriots, who patriotically at Waihi, Waikino, Huntly, Auckland, Wellington, and elsewhere showed their contempt for Labour.... We will remember!^{149.}

Ted Howard promised that he would

be found in the loyalists' lobby - make no mistake!
I am not one of those who say we have no country to save;
I am prepared to make sacrifices; I have been making sacrifices for my country all my life...
I am prepared to make sacrifices...to shed every drop of blood in Bill's (Massey's) body in defence of this country
....If it needs greater sacrifice than this, then I am prepared to sacrifice all the special constables, and

^{148.} Scott Bennett to a large crowd in King's Theatre, LT 27 Jul 1914, 8.

^{149.} MW 5 Aug 1914, 4.

even all the scabs....This war, my beloved, WILL
END CAPITALISM! Do you get that? After capitalism,
what? SOCIALISM!¹⁵⁰.

But this enthusiasm was speedily dampened by the effect the war had on working people. On the day that Germany attacked France, the Flourmillers' Association increased its price by 10%.¹⁵¹. Many other prices increased and panic-buying of groceries began, lasting for three weeks. The Government did not move to effectively control prices or supplies; for the entire duration of the war it ignored the cost of living. Trade slumped immediately the war began; a number of major Christchurch retailers cancelled large furniture orders, which put some furniture-workers out of a job. One factory asked its sixty workers if they wanted half time or 30 layoffs; they chose half-time. The Canterbury Education Board reduced its work to 'essentials', and drew a protest from the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.¹⁵². The City Council organised an Unemployment Committee, consisting of employers, union leaders, and city councillors.

Three hundred unemployed workers met at Trades Hall at the end of August. The tailoring trade had gone slack, and 100 builders' labourers had lost their jobs, during the first month of the war. Many of those present at the meeting had been steadily employed for years. The City Council offered little; it made polite approaches to the Government but was more concerned with orchestrating patriotic fervour. Daily gatherings of the unemployed were promised until work was found.¹⁵³. Ted Howard took charge of

150. Ibid, 3.

151. LT 4 Aug 1914, 11.

152. LT 13 Aug 1914, 8; 22 Aug 1914, 10.

153. LT 27 Aug 1914, 5; 29 Aug 1914, 2.

organising the city's unemployed; the General Labourers' Union had become 'the recognised place for all men in trouble to turn to. Painters, carpenters, typographical men, and in fact almost every branch of industry comes to our office, when in doubt or needing assistance'.¹⁵⁴ The Unemployment Committee suggested the construction of roads on the Port Hills and workers' housing as relief projects; these were appropriate to the needs of the unemployed, provided that adequate wages were paid. The Government indicated that few loans would be given for such work.¹⁵⁵

Workers who had not been laid off or volunteered for the front were sometimes pressured by their employers into donating a day's pay each month to the City Council's Patriotic Fund, according to one anonymous correspondent, 'and I have yet to learn that the employers have signed any agreements to pay in a stated sum during the duration of the war'.¹⁵⁶ Dan Sullivan, who like most activists took a more cautious line than the Maoriland Worker, told the daily rally of unemployed workers that

he did not wish to say anything that would stir up class feelings in the present crisis. He was not satisfied, however, that everything was being done to relieve the situation of the workers. At the beginning of the war the people of the country were asked to bring about a harmony of national sentiment, and in that respect the workers of New Zealand had been faithful to the request. They were also asked to be prepared to make sacrifices and to be economical, but in the face of all that a number of large firms had cancelled contracts, with the result that a great many persons were out of work. At the same time, too, the prices of the necessities of life were being increased, and the worker with a smaller income was asked to meet a higher cost of living.¹⁵⁷

The best that the Social Democratic Party could do was to get a

154. GLU 29 Sept 1914.

155. LT 2 Sept 1914, 10; 9 Sept 1914, 10.

156. 'Loyal Worker' LT 7 Sept 1914, 8.

157. LT 3 Sept 1914, 2.

clause inserted into the Government's War Act to prevent wage cuts.¹⁵⁸ But price rises on a static wage amounted to cuts; unions began to protest strongly. The metalworkers' Assistants' Union severely criticised the Government for not establishing a Royal Commission on food prices, and complained of 'wholesale robbery of the people'.¹⁵⁹ The Tramway Workers' Union urged a war tax on large landholdings for the purpose of providing relief work and care for soldiers' dependents, instead of using Patriotic Funds for the purpose.¹⁶⁰ The General Labourers demanded that the Government take full control of the supply of food.¹⁶¹ Other unions expressed similar concern. Little was forthcoming from the Government.

These issues were an important part of the labour campaign in the General Election held in December 1914. The Social Democratic Party was unable to go into the election as labour's sole political organisation; it did not attract the support of all other labour organisations and was forced to make deals with local Labour Representation Committees and even with individual candidates.

The first LRC was established in Dunedin at the beginning of September after an organising effort by John Rigg.¹⁶² Rigg had sat as a labour member of the Legislative Council until 1913 when he supported the Great Strike and was not reappointed. The Dunedin LRC was quickly followed by one in Wellington, composed

158. LT 10 Sept 1914, 6.

159. LT 21 Oct 1914, 8.

160. TU 8 Sept 1914.

161. GLU 29 Sept 1914.

162. Otago TLC Circular 14 Sept 1914, JTP 982/5.

of delegates from unions, the Trades Council, the SDP, and the ULP.¹⁶³ The Wellington LRC was weakened soon after its establishment by the withdrawal of the SDP; the party felt that candidates and electorates were selected without reference to the rank and file. The Social Democrats also wanted to concentrate on Wellington North, where Harry Holland, who had been jailed for a year after the Great Strike, had a number of bones to pick with Arthur Herdman, the Attorney-General.¹⁶⁴

In Christchurch no Labour Representation Committee was formally established. Bob Whiting, who had tried to keep the ULP going and was currently Mayor of Spreydon Borough, stood as an Independent Labour candidate in Christchurch South, with the endorsement of the Maoriland Worker and the tacit support of the SDP. This required some diplomacy on the part of John Rigg, who was brought down to Christchurch in September by Jack McCullough 'to try and patch up differences'. This was done at McCullough's own expense. At one stage it had been rumoured that Jimmy Thorn and Bob Whiting would both stand in Christchurch South, which would have been disastrous.¹⁶⁵ LRC candidates stood only in Wellington and Dunedin; in both cities the ULP remnant was still strong enough to be a significant alternative to the SDP.¹⁶⁶

The Social Democrats also made a number of agreements with the Liberal Party in Dunedin and Wellington. There were no such agreements made in Christchurch, except in Lyttelton; in this city the SDP was stronger than in any other. In Lyttelton the Liberals

163. Circular from Rigg to unions, 9 Oct 1914, JTP 982/5.

164. Newspaper clippings, 21 Oct 1914, JTP 982/5.

165. JAM. Diary 28 Sept 1914; LT 16 May 1914, 6.

166. Gustafson, 83-5.

threatened to nominate someone to oppose McCombs, but in the end they realised, as Fred Cooke put it, that

if the Liberals commence reprisals of that kind Kaiapoi is at our mercy. Buddo only gets in by a small majority each time and we have a Social Democratic farmer ready to oppose him if the Liberals start any games. There are several more constituencies at the mercy of the Social Democrats. So you see they also live in glass houses and Ward knows it.¹⁶⁷

In the end, there were two opposing factors to be considered by the SDP: the need to get rid of Massey's Government, and the need to establish the SDP as an independent political force. Deals with the LRCs and standing SDP candidates were necessary to fulfil the second objective, but if labour candidates stood in too many electorates they would weaken the Liberals to the point where Reform would be assured of victory. Yet if too many deals were made with the Liberals, the labour rank and file would get disillusioned and be unlikely to do the footwork necessary in an election. As Peter Fraser, the SDP national secretary, told Arthur McCarthy, who had advised against fighting Avon for the sake of 'progressive' unity:

The only way to avoid clashing with the Liberal Party would be for us to make up our minds to clear out of practically every constituency. After all we cannot afford to ignore the desires of the local Comrades who always carry the burden and heat of the fight.... This cry of ousting the Massey Government can be carried too far, if the only thing that will result is the entrenching of Liberalism for more barren years.

The SDP national executive also believed that Avon had to be fought because if there was no SDP candidate, a Prohibition candidate (probably Sullivan) would stand.¹⁶⁸

The SDP in Christchurch fought Avon (Sullivan), Christchurch

167. Cooke to McCarthy, 23 Oct 1914, McCarthy X. The 'Social Democratic farmer' may well have been Morgan Williams, Labour MP for Kaiapoi 1935-46.

168. Fraser to McCarthy, 6 Oct 1914, McCarthy X.

East (Hunter) and Lyttelton (McCombs); Bob Whiting had Christchurch South. The four labour candidates had the endorsement of most local unions. Wartime issues dominated the campaign, as well as the need to have the workers represented in Parliament. Dan Sullivan campaigned on the cost of living, and advocated increased taxation of land and monopoly profits. As far as the war was concerned, Sullivan advocated a voluntary recruitment; he pointed to the fact that many Social Democrats and workers had already enlisted.¹⁶⁹ Hiram Hunter went further and called the war a just war; but the general attitude to the war among SDP activists was more cautious.¹⁷⁰ They did not condemn it outright as a capitalists' war, as Ted Howard and the Maoriland Worker had done, but they were extremely critical of the Government's prosecution of the war. At the heart of the labour campaign was the principle that the war's burdens should be shared equally; this later developed into the anti-conscription campaign on the grounds that wealth should be conscripted before men. In 1914, the cost of living and its sudden rise dominated the labour campaign, and the labour candidates pledged their support to Ward rather than Massey, should a no-confidence vote arise.¹⁷¹ Bob Whiting promised to give Ward 'every assistance to break up land monopoly, reduce the cost of living, place the burden of taxation on the shoulders of those best able to bear it, secure proportional representation and industrial reform'.¹⁷² That was a fair indication of the price labour politicians would have demanded for supporting the Liberals.

169. LT 22 Oct 1914, 9.

170. LT 17 Nov 1914, 9.

171. E.g. LT 23 Nov 1914, 9.

172. LT 8 Dec 1914, 5.

The election results showed a further gaining of ground by labour candidates. The election was conducted on the usual first-past-the-post system; the second ballot had been abolished. Dan Sullivan lost in Avon by just over a thousand votes, which was much better than labour had done in 1908 or 1911. James McCombs took 61% of the vote in Lyttelton. Hiram Hunter was defeated in Christchurch East by 2000 votes; Dr. Thacker had replaced T. H. Davey as the Official Liberal candidate when Davey resigned from the party in protest at its rightward drift. Bob Whiting was heavily beaten in Christchurch South by Harry Ell, who won by almost 2500 votes. Across the country the election was a near draw; Reform ended up with a majority of one seat over the Opposition, which included six labour MPs. Labour's total in the 18 electorates it fought under various labels was 37%; in the country as a whole it was 9.5%. In the four Christchurch electorates, the SDP and Whiting won 36.1% of the vote.¹⁷³ Avon was clearly within striking distance for labour, and the crisis of the war would put Christchurch South and Christchurch East within labour's grasp as well.

The years of the First World War were years of hardship for many workers. Activists in the labour movement united on the issues which had become clear in the first months of the war. Demands for a planned wartime economy, ensuring adequate employment, food, clothing, and housing for workers and soldiers' dependents were linked with resistance to conscription, which was imposed for wartime in August 1916. Working-class protest was

173. LT 11 Dec 1914, 6; Richardson, 213; Gustafson, 86; J.T. Paul, Humanism in Politics, 177; AJHR, 1915, H-24A.

boosted by the war, but it had existed for years before on the same issues, and on issues of control in the workplace. By 1914 the actions of employers and the repressive State had, in Christchurch at least, inspired the mainstream of the labour movement to shift its focus from the workplace to parliamentary and municipal institutions alone. We do not know a great deal about conflict within the workplace during the war years, but the emphasis of the labour movement in Christchurch seems to have firmly parliamentarist. By 1919 the radical Liberals had been detached from the labour movement, frightened off by the militant anti-conscription policies of the movement,¹⁷⁴ and the political arm of labour had at last been united, into the second New Zealand Labour Party. But the co-ordination of the industrial and the political arms of the movement that had been the vision of the Unity Congress in July 1913 was broken for good in the repression of the Great Strike. In some ways, the labour movement never recovered from that battle with the employers and the capitalist State.

174. Plumridge, 'Labour in Christchurch' pp179-81.

CHAPTER SIXCLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

...the reason of the large output (in the United States) is specialising, coupled with a total disregard of life or limb...the American workman does not stand in the same field with the New Zealand workman as a tradesman. He is only a machine, a specialist...of little use away from one particular item of production.¹

The workplace has been studied little by labour historians in New Zealand, yet it has been shown to have been of crucial importance in the history of the labour movement. Years of conflict over control of the work process, over skilled workers' craft, over falling wages and rising unemployment, had united workers into a movement that transcended traditional boundaries between skilled and unskilled workers. By 1914, the labour movement in Christchurch was stronger and more united than anywhere else in the country, with the exception of some mining districts. Although there had been tremendous gains in class consciousness and unity by 1914, these gains were ambiguous. We have seen that experiences of daily life within and outside the workplace were crucial in radicalising working people by 1914. But after the defeat of the Great Strike in December 1913, the labour movement in Christchurch seemed to direct its energies more towards organising for parliamentary and municipal action than for confronting employers in the workplace. The role played by the State in breaking the strikes of 1912 and 1913 had shown that it was indeed necessary for workers to organise to take control of state

1. Manifesto from the Canterbury Trades Council, May 1907.
LT 14 May 1907, 3.

institutions. But without continued close organisation in the workplace, around issues of wages, employment, and job control, resistance to employers would be weakened. After 1909 the Canterbury Trades Council had lost the confidence of many unions as it directed all its energies towards the conquest of parliamentary power, to the detriment of workplace issues. The greatest casualty of 1913 was the 'fight on all fronts' strategy of the July 1913 Unity Congress.

New Zealand was not the only country in the world that had a wave of industrial unrest in the years immediately before World War One. Strikes and revolts also occurred throughout Europe, North America, and Australia. These were in response to the same process of capitalist restructuring. Nor was it any coincidence that the First World War followed this wave of workers' revolt so closely. The fundamental cause of the war was the growing imperialist rivalry between the major industrialised powers over the quarter-century before 1914; as the Maoriland Worker said when the war broke out, 'despite all the tall talk of "patriotism", "loyalty", "fatherland" and the like, the propelling force back of the whole bloody and damnable conspiracy is DIVIDENDS, DIVIDENDS, DIVIDENDS!'². The analysis of the First World War as an imperialist war, 'a war for the division of the world, for the partition and repartition of colonies and spheres of influence of finance capital, etc' was summarised by Lenin in his classic pamphlet, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism.³

2. MW 5 Aug 1914, 4.

3. V.I. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1978, 9. The pamphlet was first published in 1916.

Although New Zealand was not a major capitalist power, it was firmly located within the capitalist network as a British dominion.

Imperialism and scientific management were the crucial components of the development of capitalism on a world scale between 1890 and 1914; they arose out of the great crisis of capitalism, or depression, of 1873-96.⁴ In the words of one of the few scholars who have linked imperialism and scientific management:

To save the system and to restore profitability two remedies were above all imperative: one, a decisive expansion of the markets and the opening up of new territories, and fields for capital investment, in other words imperialism, and two, a substantial increase in the rate of exploitation of the labour employed in production at home.

Although both methods were used in varying proportions in many countries,

The first of these remedies recommended itself foremost to the rich creditor nations like Britain and France, while the second was particularly pressant for the USA, then still a debtor country but in full sweep of industrialisation and landed with the world's highest wage level.⁵

Industrialisation in New Zealand was partial and lopsided compared to the United States, but this country shared with the United States the position of a debtor country, and this was one pressure on capitalism in New Zealand which made the application of scientific management urgent.

Scientific management is often known as Taylorism, from

4. Tony Elger and Bill Schwarz 'Monopoly Capitalism and the Impact of Taylorism' in Theo Nichols, ed, Capital and Labour, 362.
5. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, 'Mental and Manual Labour in Marxism', in Stuart Hall and Paul Walton, eds, Situating Marx, London, Human Context Books, 1971; quoted in Nichols, ed, 363.

Frederick W. Taylor, who was responsible for many of the relevant theories in the years just before World War One. But to call the process Taylorism implies that it was the invention of one person, whereas

What Taylor did was...to synthesise and present as a reasonably coherent whole ideas which had been germinating and gathering force in Great Britain and the United States throughout the nineteenth century. He gave to a disconnected series of initiatives and experiments a philosophy and a title.⁶

Harry Braverman, in his standard work on scientific management, or 'American methods', as it was known to Christchurch employers, shows that it consists of three principles. First, 'The labor process isrendered independent of craft, tradition, and the workers' knowledge...to depend not at all upon the abilities of workers, but entirely upon the practices of management'.⁷

The second principle is closely allied to the first: 'All possible brain-work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning or laying-out department....'⁸. The third principle involves using management's knowledge and management's planning facilities to break the work process into tasks and to 'use... this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labour process and its mode of execution'.⁹

The whole point of scientific management, indeed of the

6. Lyndall Urwick and E.F.L. Brech, The Making of Scientific Management, vol 1, London 1945, p17: quoted in Harry Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital, 89.
Time-controls with new machinery were imposed on workers in British textile-mills right at the end of the eighteenth century; see E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism' Past & Present 38 (1967), 65, 78. Young women in Massachusetts textile-mills complained about their 'obedience to the ding-dong of the bell - just as though we were so many living machines'; see Herbert G. Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society in Industrialising America New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976, 28.
7. Braverman, 113.
8. F. W. Taylor, 'Shop Management' in Scientific Management, New York and London, 1947, 98-9, quoted in Braverman, 113.
9. Braverman, 119.

labour process under capitalism, is that the workers' labour is purchased and controlled by the employer, and the labour process is oriented towards the creation of profit. Scientific management is directed towards controlling workers in a social system in which a clash of interests between employers and workers is inherent. The efficiency merchants of the Employers' Association sought to gain control over the workers and increase the profit made from each worker by speeding up the process of work, by imposing piecework wages, by cutting wages in real terms, by introducing more productive machinery, and by attempting to break the power of unions in all spheres.

The state played an important part in this process. The Liberal Party was elected in 1890 on a programme of reform, and remained a reformist party for some years. Ultimately, however, the Liberal Government existed to guarantee the conditions necessary for the prosperity and expansion of capitalism in New Zealand. After 1890, capitalism in its New Zealand form had become well-established, at the expense of Maori society and culture, particularly communal landholding. With this done, the nature of the State in New Zealand changed; when 'pre-capitalist obstacles to capitalist development have been cleared away, the bourgeoisie does not have to direct the state itself, as long as the state power is one that will maintain the juridical framework and repress any revolutionary challenge to it'.¹⁰ The Liberal Party was therefore in a tricky position. On the one hand it needed the votes of working people to stay in office; on the other it had to ensure

10. David Fernbach, intro. to Karl Marx, Surveys from Exile, London: Allen Lane, 1973, 16-17.

a favourable climate for employers. The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act became the centre of the Liberals' strategy; the Act gave certain legal rights to unions, but at the same time had the potential to restrain union militancy. The Canterbury Employers' Association believed that from about 1899 workers began to 'use' the Arbitration Act to their own advantage; certainly, this was a time when the Arbitration Court granted a good number of wage rises.¹¹ But by 1907 the Court was acting as a brake on wages, and was also ratifying the employers' efficiency drive through its awards. Although most unions in Christchurch chose to remain registered under the Arbitration Act, they became increasingly critical of its operation and certainly did not see it as the last word in industrial relations. A number of unions, beginning with the Slaughtermen, went further and used the strike weapon or were prepared to consider doing so. The Liberal Government responded with punitive amendments to the arbitration laws, which only had the effect of making the workers angrier. The unwillingness or inability of the Liberal Government to continue with a programme of reform strengthened the socialist element in the Trades Council and unions, and was behind the steady growth of electoral support for independent labour candidates in parliamentary and municipal elections. By 1912 some progress had been made: Tommy Taylor had been elected Mayor with labour support, and four labour city councillors had been elected from Sydenham. But the parliamentary seats were still firmly controlled by Liberals who had the advantage of being more reformist than the mainstream of the party.

11. Canterbury Employers' Association, Annual Report, 1908.
I am indebted to Len Richardson for supplying these references to me.

The relationship of the state to the labour movement changed greatly between the mid-1890s and 1914. Unions looked to the state to protect them from the effects of uninhibited capitalism, and after 1905 the state became increasingly unsympathetic to workers' experience of rising prices and less secure employment. These factors, combined with the employers' offensive for control in the workplace, radicalised many unions and individuals. One need only recall the example of Alfred Hart, a painter who was President of the Trades Council from 1908 to 1909. He publicly endorsed the Liberals in the 1908 election, but a year later signed a manifesto condemning the Government, and during 1910 he campaigned for a socialist political strategy in the labour movement. Hart was elected to the City Council in 1911 and was respected by both the Labour Party and the Red Federation. He died in 1912 aged 45, of lead poisoning contracted at his trade, and public assistance had to be sought for his widow and children.

Like many skilled workers, Alfred Hart was radicalised by his experiences. Unemployment was a common seasonal problem for unskilled labourers, but restructuring of production and the introduction of new technology meant that from about 1909 many skilled workers had their first dose of unemployment for over ten years. Moulding-machines which could be operated by labourers, joinery machines, and new machinery in bootmaking were examples of this process; it occurred in the United States as well where by 1915 the typical unemployed male was a skilled specialist, a victim of scientific management.¹² Little wonder, then, that

12. David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America, 102.

skilled workers in Christchurch were loud in their condemnation of 'American methods'. Piecework payments were the key to the application of scientific management in Christchurch and workers protested at the way in which the pace of work was speeded up. In some cases at least workers resisted this speed-up by secret agreements to limit output; union minute-books do not show any such agreements, but employers complained of them.¹³ In some industries workers may have found these tactics effective; in others, piecework vastly increased employers' profits. As well as increasing the rate of exploitation, scientific management removed a large amount of skill from the work process. The principle of removing all intellectual effort from the shop floor was applied in the Addington Railway Workshops, as we may assume it was also applied in private firms. In 1909 a Government Board of Inquiry was held to investigate charges of systematic slacking and inefficiency in the Workshops. Hugh Sloane, a fitter employed at ten shillings and sixpence per day, testified that he had invented hydraulic couplings, ticket-snippers, king-pins, and other equipment, and had worked out how to stop the belt slipping off, which saved eight hours per month in lost time. All the planning for this was done in his own time, and he received no recognition for his inventiveness. A blacksmith, John May, told a similar story. In a scientifically-managed enterprise, workers were not supposed to take any hand in devising or controlling the production process. The foremen at Addington spent some-hours each day in writing out exact instructions for each job for the skilled workers under them.¹⁴ The erosion of skill was a major subject

13. E.g. Canterbury Employers' Association, Annual Report 1908, 15.

14. AJHR, 1909, D-4A, 27, 31, 42-3.

of dissatisfaction under scientific management. Metal tradesmen experienced the effects of 'American methods' perhaps more sharply than other skilled workers, and protested accordingly. By 1912 at least two metal unions, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Moulders, were becoming aligned with the Red Federation of Labour.

As a result of experiences that were becoming the common lot of all workers - falling real wages, insecurity of employment, and assaults on union powers to regulate the workplace - the traditional distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers were largely eroded by 1913. Brother Moody of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was in a minority when he stated that 'the General Labourers' Union was an irresponsible Union', when the ASCJ was asked by Ted Howard to assist with strike funds.¹⁵

If there was a unity of experience by 1913, it took a violent shock for this unity to become reflected in the institutions of the labour movement. The contradictory position of the Liberals had eventually become untenable; as a party of reform unwilling to challenge the fundamental social relations of capitalist society, they had been unable to handle the growing tensions in New Zealand society, and were replaced by Massey's Reform Party in 1912. Waihi was a salutary lesson to the leaders of the divided labour movement; the rank and file of many unions pushed their organisations into unity in 1913 around a militant 'fight on all fronts' strategy. Employers regarded this as a grave threat and,

15. ASCJ 18 Nov 1913.

backed by the force of the state, moved to smash the new organisation. In this they were partially successful. The United Federation of Labour never lived up to its promise, and was speedily overshadowed by the Social Democratic Party.

Christchurch was in 1914 the Social Democrats' major urban stronghold. The city had the reputation of being the 'home of militant anti-militarism and socialist activity'; in Addington, there were 'more Social Democrats to the square inch than in any other part of New Zealand bar Woolston and Runanga'.¹⁶ Years of conflict with employers in the workplace, of falling wages, of rising unemployment, and of growing state authoritarianism had combined to change the face of the labour movement in Christchurch.¹⁷ Unions had for years been active on workplace issues. A tactical alliance had been made with the Liberals in the 1890s, but when Liberal reformism showed itself to be inadequate to resolve the class conflicts between employers and workers, the labour movement in Christchurch abandoned Liberalism. Over the ten years before the outbreak of war, the Liberal face of the Christchurch labour

16. MW 12 Aug 1914, 12, quoted in E. W. Plumridge 'Labour in Christchurch', 1; James Thorn in MW, 1 Apr 1914, 2.

17. It was these experiences, felt sharply in industrialised Christchurch, and the long tradition of radicalism in the city's craft unions, that accounted for the strength of the SDP; not, as Libby Plumridge suggests, the activity of a number of British immigrants in the Woolston SDP. Plumridge credits these people, who had been active in the British Independent Labour Party, with the success of the Woolston SDP. Although these people were certainly important to the SDP, its success was based on the workers' grievances. And what were these ex-ILP members doing before 1913? I do not believe they were sitting around waiting for the SDP to be created. Were some of them, like Fred Cooke, active in unions and the Socialist Party and the anti-militarism movement before 1913? See Libby Plumridge, 'A Necessary But Not Sufficient Condition', NZJH, 19, (1985).

movement became socialist. True, the Liberals were not displaced until 1919; it required the greater crisis of war to produce complete unity in the labour movement. But by 1914 workers' conflict with employers and the employers' state had in Christchurch produced a militant, class-conscious, socialist labour movement.

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Lyttelton Times. This was the single most important source. The Lyttelton Times was one of Christchurch's two morning dailies, and was firmly Liberal in orientation. It gave a wide and balanced coverage of political, industrial, and workplace events, although perhaps covered less working-class news in the later part of the period. Collection in the History Department, University of Canterbury.

Maoriland Worker. Published monthly by the Shearers' Federation from 1910, and weekly by the Red Federation of Labour from May 1911. This was useful for the Red Fed perspective, and especially for Ted Howard's entertaining columns published under the pen-name 'The Vag'. These columns often gave a picture of the life of the poorest of Christchurch's working class. The anti-militarist campaign was also well covered. After 1912, the Worker became the official organ of the United Federation of Labour - Social Democratic Party. Collection in the Hocken Library, University of Otago.

Canterbury Times. A weekly illustrated paper published by the Lyttelton Times Company, this had many relevant photographs and was the main source for these. The Weekly Press was also used for some photos. Collections in the Canterbury Public Library.

2. Manuscripts & Records

Trade Union Archives, University of Canterbury. Union and Trades Council minute-books were the other main source for this thesis. They showed the attitudes of specific unions to current issues, and gave a good focus on the workplace. Of course, the records of individual unions varied in usefulness. The Iron and Brass Moulders were the best; those of the clothing trades, the Bootmakers, the General Labourers, the Tramways, and the Furniture Trades unions were also very good. Some, like the Plasterers and Plumbers, were of little use even when covering the full period. Records for the period 1905 - 1914 exist for the following organisations:

- Christchurch Boilermakers' and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders' Un.
- Christchurch General Labourers' Union
- Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Christchurch Branch
- Christchurch Plumbers' and Gas fitters' Union
- Christchurch Plasterers' Union
- Christchurch Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union
- Christchurch Tailoring Trade Union

Christchurch Operative Bootmakers' Society
 Canterbury Freezers' Union
 Christchurch United Furniture Trades Union
 Christchurch Iron and Brass Moulers' Union
 Christchurch Painters' Union
 Christchurch Tramways' Union
 Canterbury Trades and Labour Council

J A McCullough Papers. The papers of Jack McCullough, Workers' Representative on the Arbitration Court 1907-22, and a leader of the socialist faction in the Christchurch labour movement from 1900. Contains diaries 1908-22 and letters for the same period. The collection concentrates on McCullough's career on the Court, but also has useful material on the socialists and their attempts to establish a strong independent labour party. Collection in the Canterbury Museum Library.

J T Paul Papers. Paul had much influence in the Otago Trades Council, and was involved in the independent labour movement from 1904, although he was one of the most conservative of its leaders. He attempted to obstruct the Unity movement in 1913. His papers contain correspondence, cuttings, minutes, handbills, and photographs relevant to the PLL, the NZLP and the ULP on a national level, as well as much on these bodies in Dunedin and on the Otago Trades Council and unions. Collection in the Hocken Library, University of Otago.

E J Howard Papers. This small collection of Ted Howard's papers contains minutes of the Christchurch PLL, Howard's intermittent journal, and a number of photographs. Collection in the Hocken Library.

A P McCarthy Papers. Arthur McCarthy was a Dunedin socialist, active in the ULP and J T Paul's opponent in the latter's attempts to sabotage the Unity movement in 1913. His papers contain a good deal of material on this period. Collection in the Hocken Library.

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